



EDWARD WILGENBACH

US. WESTERN MASS



**"NON
SATIS
SCIRE"**

- Ken Burns

THE OMEN

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Submissions are due always, constantly, so submit forever. You can submit in any format (**NO PDFS PLEASE**) by CD, Flash Drive, singing telegram, carrier pigeon, paper airplane, Fed-Ex, Pony Express, or email. Get your submissions to omen@hampshire.edu, the Omen Office, Mia's mailbox (1084), Willow's mailbox (1265), or Max's mailbox (0509).

Policy

The Omen is an every-other-week-ly publication that is the world's only example of the consistent application of a straightforward policy: we publish all signed submissions from members of the Hampshire community that break neither the law nor the Hampshire College Student Handbook. Send your impassioned yet poorly-thought-out rants, self-insertion fanfiction, MS Paint comics, and whiny emo poetry to omen@hampshire.edu; we'll publish it all, and we're happy to do it. The Omen is about giving you a voice, no matter how little you deserve it. Since its founding in December of 1992 by Stephanie Cole, the Omen has hardly ever missed an issue, making it Hampshire's longest-running publication.

Your Omen submission (you're submitting right now, right?) might not be edited, and we can't promise any spellchecking either, so any horrendous mistakes are your fault, not ours. We do promise not to insert comical spelling mistakes in submissions to make you look foolish.

Your submission must include the name you use around campus: an open forum comes with a responsibility to take ownership of your views. Views expressed in the Omen do not necessarily reflect the views of the Omen editor, the Omen staff, or anyone, anywhere, living or dead.

The Omen staff consists of whoever shows up for Omen layout, which take place every other Friday at 7:00 p.m. in the basement of Merrill A. You should come and answer the staff box question. We don't bite. You can find the Omen every other Monday in Saga, the post office, online at expelallo.men, and just about any other place we can find to put it.

Find all issues here!



Views in the Omen (5)

Do not necessarily (7)

Reflect the staff's views (5)

Staff Box: (In order of appearance)

Mia: great googly moogly!

Willow: Rats!

Max: Oh lord...

Finch: Lord almighty

Jack: Great heavens.

Jordan: Crikey!?

Lin: hark!

María: Nuh uh

Nic: Exsqueeze me?!

Leo: aur naur.....

Sean: [Shrieking noises]

Front Cover: Mia Sanghvi

Back Cover: Maxine Aurelia-Ann Gamboa

EDITORIAL

We All Took a Shower

by Max, Willow, and Mia

Hiya!

It's already the end of the semester. Wow. I feel like these past few months have gone by in the blink of an eye.

I'm ready to go home, but I also feel like the semester has just started lol

Overall, I'd say this semester has been great, but of course, every period has its ups and downs.

I'm in a mod with some friends this year, and generally, it's been great, but I'm also getting used to living with others who aren't just my dad, lol. I've been learning a lot in my classes, especially about psychology and critical theory. I've also had the opportunity to do cognitive science research, such as studying sleep. You might have seen my posters about taking one of my "eepy" surveys around campus. In all honesty, I'm having a blast. I didn't think I'd enjoy doing research this much, but here I am! Also as of right now, I think being a professor in the future might be really cool. The Hampshire student-to-professor pipeline is real.

Taking care of this bebe (the Omen) has been a wonderful experience, although I was honestly unprepared for how challenging it could be sometimes. It was a bit overwhelming between figuring out what submissions to put in for each issue, making sure we had enough money to print, and actually getting the issues out! I definitely would not have been able to handle it without the other two editors, Max and Willow. They're very awesome, caring, and understanding! I am also very thankful to Leo and Jay, the former editors of the Omen, for helping us three navigate how to be editors. Your advice and wisdom are so helpful and appreciated.

As I'm learning during my time at Hampshire, doing stuff alone sucks balls! I am incredibly grateful that I've found a wonderful community here. I've learned so much from those around me, and I'm exponentially happier being around those I love. Hampshire has made me realize just how important community is.

We humans aren't meant to do everything ourselves, and therefore, it's completely okay to rely on others. We aren't weak for doing so! This might seem like common sense, but I find that today's American culture heavily promotes independence to the point of isolation.

I'm gonna be completely honest and say that I'm trying to write this as quickly as possible because I need to work on my finals haha....I've got so much to do T-T

For those of you who are in the same boat of feeling really stressed out right now:
You are amazing, and you got this! I'm sending lots of good vibes your way! :)

Okay, back to doing my classwork :.)

With lots of love,

Mia



I Microwaved Tea for the First Time

By Maxine Aurelia-Ann Gamboa




This semester has been a doozy. I can't say I'm sad to return home and pretend that Hampshire doesn't exist for a few months¹. I need a break!

Omen editing is no joke. They say it takes a village, well, I'd say the Bebe's village has done a kickass job this semester. Mia & Willow are the best co-editors a genderfuck could ask for, I love you guys! The elders Jay and Leo have provided great advice when we little lads needed it.

¹ I do this every end of the semester, it's a nice mental break! If you ask me about Hampshire plans during the Summer I will respond with: Hampshire? Like the State?

You were always a Discord message away, that support meant a ton, get some sleep you fuckers!!

If you told me at the beginning of the semester that I would be considering a future path towards editing after college *because* of The Omen I would have asked you what edible you ingested and if I could have a piece (allegedly).

Now, I can see myself doing this after Hampshire. Time works in funny ways like that, I hope to be continuously surprised as the year wraps up. I'm still figuring out my place in this world, though I would argue that I (and every person) inherently have a place in the world². So, time for further exploring, see y'all next semester! 

2 Welcome to the contradicting/self-debating spectacle that is my mind! I have two horses inside of me... (how hungry?)

this semester has taken a lot out of me, & i don't feel like pushing myself to say something profound when i feel so creatively bankrupt, so i'll just thank max, mia, & last year's omen signers for everything they've done this semester for this publication, & for picking up my slack when i needed them to. i'm coming to recognize that almost no part of my college life is as unchanging as i had imagined last year, & it's made me appreciate their openness, understanding, & stability all the more. to all of you, you mean a lot to me, & i look forward to working with you again next semester!

-willow watson 



SECTION SPEAK

RA Resignation Letter

By Hayley Summers

Matt Troutman and Will Rosa,

I am resigning my position as an RA. My last day will be the last day of the Fall 2023 semester.

I am only making this decision after being backed into a corner and left no other options. The incompetence, blatant disdain for disabled students and casual cruelty of some working in reslife has forced my hand. I can no longer call myself a part of such a broken institution which willingly causes so much harm to students.

Reslife has allowed students to go weeks without access to hot water, ignored complaints from students of color about white students making them feel unsafe, and even refused to fix serious sanitation plumbing issues over weekends. This administration has proven they do not care about my residents in the POC identity halls, not only through its gross negligence, but also by allowing students who have repeatedly caused harm in the Hampshire community to stay without any accountability/repercussions. Meanwhile, BIPOC students are treated as less than an afterthought. Because of these choices made by reslife, I refuse to support it in any way, and that includes my position as an RA.

Throughout this semester, I have not received a single piece of positive feedback about any aspect of my performance. Instead, I have been unfortunate to be on the receiving end of a steady stream of criticism and passive aggressive put downs, creating a toxic work environment that has begun to affect my mental health. I have tried asking people in reslife for support, only to be completely ignored or told I am wrong for needing the support.

This treatment began to intensify when I revealed I have a disability- since then I have been treated as a burden and inconvenience. A large part of my decision to resign is due to being on the receiving end of an blatantly unequal treatment compared to other employees. I fear every day that if my performance is not perfect, it will be just the excuse needed by reslife to finally fire me. This kind of pressure isn't compatible with my life as a full time student.

Hayley

Addendum 12/6: after writing my resignation letter I uncovered some disturbing facts. In October, I told Matt Troutman I was struggling financially and asked for an exception to be allowed to work on campus and he denied me, called me disrespectful and refused to speak to me further. Recently I learned that Matt has allowed other RAs to have multiple additional jobs on campus despite it being against our employment contract. When a white student confronted him about the rule, he offered them an exception to work on campus and a special winter break job, while I am forced to resign in part because I am banned from getting other employment to supplement the low RA wages.



We Will Not Stay Silent.

By Adryanna Snow

You are not above us.

You don't get to make jokes that "aren't for everyone."

If you think you're above us, then you shouldn't have to climb balconies to get to us.

Bronzer won't let you onto the POC floors.

If you're not invited, then stop assuming you are.

Actions like this are part of the reason the college holds events like this one today.

You're a part of the problem.

Don't try to deny your wrongdoings.

People who feel bad don't call themselves "Hitler's wet dream."

White men can't and won't tell us what to do or who we are.

You are not above racism, you are not above us, and you never will be.

We were told not to name names.

We were told to be quiet for the safety of this student.

But what makes his safety more important than ours?

- POCU (People of Color United.)



The Unmaking of an IT Department: A Cautionary Tale

By Jonathon Podolsky F'94



Last day of Hampshire's IT Department.

Pictured above L to R: Gaby Richard-Harrington, Amanda Saklad P18 (parent of student who entered in 2018), Kate MacGregor, Lili Dwight 74F (alum who entered Fall 1974), Jeff Schmittlein, Rae Ann Wentworth-Cadieux, Staci Frieze 79F.

Picture Credit: Nebraska Chatham (Access Services Associate: Evening Supervisor, Harold Johnson Library, Hampshire College).
Also see [Thank you from IT](#) which includes other staff members.

The Unmaking of an IT Department: A Cautionary Tale

Why did Hampshire College, an iconic progressive institution saved from closure in 2019, outsource Information Technology (IT) service to a national for-profit and lay off dedicated employees, some of whom had been there for decades?

Hampshire's president, Ed Wingenbach, says there will be financial savings and improved nimbleness. Many in the community claim benefits will be elusive and the harm to the community all too real.

This article goes on a journey deep into outsourcing - because this is not just a one-time issue but a high-stakes example of a story we must learn from - if we want Hampshire to thrive over the long run.

Hampshire's Financial Imperative

In a tragically misguided attempt to make acquiring Hampshire easier for another college, the [past administration turned away an incoming class](#) in 2019. This blunder greatly exacerbated Hampshire's financial challenges. To address that, the college made enormous cuts, increased fundraising and enrollment, and remains on a narrow path to financial sustainability. Intelligent financial decisions and vigilance are still necessary to maintain accreditation and prevent it from closing or losing independence.

Something Had to be Done

Wm. Josiah Erikson 97F, P13, a former Hampshire staff trustee, worked at Hampshire for 22 years and was one of the IT department's co-leaders. I spoke with him via Zoom:

"Higher ed has trouble retaining IT in the first place, more so at Hampshire. There were several failed searches for positions in the IT department, including network (two failed searches) and system administrator."

I interviewed Jeff Butera via Zoom. He worked for Hampshire IT for 20 years and Ellucian Managed Services (EMS) at another college for two years. Hampshire had 20 full-time equivalent employees in IT in 2018, but it declined to ten by 2023. After the Chief Information Officer (CIO) departed in 2018, that position was left unfilled to save money. After that, co-leaders ran the department, two of whom moved on last year.

Butera believes the absence of a CIO may have led to pressure from the college's insurer, who wanted to see a CIO and cybersecurity officer in place. Insurers are increasingly concerned with cybersecurity due in part to increasing ransomware attacks. Hampshire is covered by [Captive Insurance Company](#), which was formed by Hampshire, Amherst, Smith, and Mt. Holyoke. At press time, it was unclear whether this insurance covered cyber attacks.

The Announcement

On June 6, Wingenbach [announced the transition to Ellucian](#). Two well-attended staff meetings had students, faculty, and alums, who raised many critical questions and strident complaints about the so-called "town hall" process and the decision.

Twenty-nine faculty members collectively sent a letter to the administration on June 6 and another on Sept. 12 ([Omen 59.1](#) includes both letters). The community registered opposition through a petition that received [nearly 1100 signatures](#). Nevertheless, last summer, the administration struck this deal while students were away, and the replacement of Hampshire's IT department by EMS began in the fall.

Most people I spoke with believed that Wingenbach announced the decision over the summer to skirt student opposition. In 2019, a student sit-in helped prevent Hampshire's leaders from executing plans to have the college acquired. It also helped lead to the resignations of the president and a faction of the board of trustees. A rally opposed the IT department's replacement, with an estimated 50-75 people in attendance, but it was too late to prevent the contract from being signed.

People felt that the administration's process violated Hampshire's values by lacking transparency and shared governance, and excluding those it affected. The process contrasted with labor rights and social justice taught by educators at Hampshire.

Student Perspectives

I interviewed Jack Merrill F22 (Hampshire specifies the entry semester before the year for students, after the year for alums) in person. In his on-campus job, he worked closely with IT and is a web developer studying interface design:

"This wasn't Hampshire-like. It broke community norms and harms part of the community. IT staff had been here so long. I am aggravated that they did that. From initial conversations with interims, they didn't fit in with Hampshire's mission. They could at Smith or UMass. At Hampshire, they just didn't fit in with the community. A lot of students are upset. No opinions were sought from students and staff."

I spoke with Adonis Dickey F23 in person. He hasn't worked directly with IT, but still found this an important issue:

"I chose Hampshire because of its community v. other colleges. For the college not to include community and oust beloved staff is wrong and not what I expected when I applied. IT is the backbone of the school; website, how to sign-up for classes. With the values of Hampshire College – it should have been a student-involved decision. When people were showing up about how bad a decision it was, people should have stopped then but didn't.

I want the administration to hold more to the college's values. Hampshire doesn't stay that way because of the name but because of the people in the community want it to be what it is. Going forward, it should involve students and the community. There are always things that can change as the world changes, but there are still core values. Hampshire is built around non-traditional. Outsourcing goes against what Hampshire is, a community of people exploring their own thing."

A letter from Eliot Troop F22, published in [Omen 59.3](#), states in part:

"One of the main reasons I chose to apply early decision to Hampshire was its seemingly tight knit community and respect for students...This goes against everything I thought Hampshire was."

What Was Special

Hampshire is intentionally different from other colleges, even those that use narrative evaluations. Hampshire has been a place of innovation, with the [first undergraduate program in computer science](#) and the first [non-human faculty](#). These "firsts" reflect that Hampshire has the potential for rapid innovation, which may be difficult for a standard Managed Service Provider like Ellucian to support. Jeff Butera believes the change will not work well for Hampshire and will not save money. He wrote to me:

"Ellucian has NO INTENT to learn Hampshire. They want to take the systems that were built to address Hampshire's unique Divisional system and narrative-based class evaluations and throw it all away. They believe they can find off-the-shelf systems to solve these problems. When you have an academic model that's unique, no vendor makes software that fits just right."

I interviewed Chris Perry, a professor emeritus of media arts and sciences from Hampshire, via LinkedIn:

"In my experience at Hampshire, every time we tried an off-the-shelf software solution we found it wasn't adequate for our needs. No single piece of software was designed to support HC's unique curriculum. Basically, we couldn't outsource our software needs because no one in the marketplace has the same needs (narrative evaluations, no departments, unique academic programs for every student, a constantly changing set of rules for graduation, and so forth). So there was rarely if ever an existing solution that fit. Thus I question the choice of trading internal people with deep knowledge of HC for an outsourced group who will try to solve HC's problems by using, by default, what works for everyone else."

Lee Spector, a former Dean of the School of Cognitive Science, is now a Professor of Computer Science at Amherst College. He explained how IT at Hampshire made unique work possible and created a competitive edge. I interviewed him via email:

"A lot of what I was able to do at Hampshire, and that the students with whom I worked were able to do, was enabled by dedicated and creative IT staff who were there at the time. One example was the development and maintenance of a high performance computer cluster that was significantly more capable than anything available at other small liberal arts colleges. This enabled a lot of work in AI (by myself, Jaime Davila, and many students) and also in animation (largely through Chris Perry and his students). There were many other instances in which Hampshire IT went above and beyond what one might normally expect from a small liberal arts college IT department, and I think this was driven by their unusual commitment to students, faculty, and the Hampshire mission."

Jutta Sperling, Professor of History at Hampshire, told me that Hampshire IT provided a unique level of service, came up with great solutions to tech challenges, and was skillful in supporting niche software. I interviewed her via Zoom:

“Kate [Macgregor, who until the outsourcing worked in Hampshire’s IT department providing tech support for faculty] has been personally generous with her time, even helping retired folks. She has solved every problem intelligently. Nobody on earth will ever get someone like Kate for what we paid her. It’s a question of value and what she provided. Kate was undervalued and clearly not comparable. Working somewhere else, she would have made multiples of her income at Hampshire. I valued her (as somebody who volunteered to work for Hampshire College for a lower salary to build the institution), as well as personally for her generosity and intelligence.”

Labor Policy

James Wald, Associate Professor of History, Hampshire College, states, **“Hampshire is marketing a Bernie Sanders curriculum based on a Walmart labor policy.”**

The Ellucian deal included no job guarantees for Hampshire’s IT staff. These dedicated employees received a maximum of six weeks’ severance – even for one employee who provided almost four decades of service. For comparison, past president Mim Nelson, whose failed strategic partnership nearly tanked the college, received almost \$900,000 in compensation in 2019, according to Hampshire’s [IRS 990](#). Compared to previous years’ compensation for Hampshire’s president, this amounts to a payoff of about half a million dollars.

Washtenaw Community College (WCC) in Michigan also outsourced to Ellucian in 2019. [Inside Higher Ed](#) and [MLive](#) reported that all staff at WCC would be guaranteed a position at Ellucian. They received 3-12 months’ severance, career counseling, and a 5-year extension of their current benefits.

Why weren’t Hampshire IT workers guaranteed positions at Ellucian? Doing so would have preserved institutional knowledge and avoided the damage to trust and morale from continued layoffs. Even with Hampshire’s financial challenges, it may have been possible to negotiate training for current employees to fit into new positions at Ellucian or a phased handover that would have allowed some staff to finish their careers at Hampshire.

Another possibility could have started with filling an in-house CIO position. That person would have coordinated the augmentation of Hampshire’s staff through more training (including cyber security certificates), internships, alum fellowships (positions for recent graduates), consulting, occasional use of job search firms, and strong partnerships. For example, according to Jeff Butera, Hampshire looked into a shared 5-college position for cybersecurity back in 2018. You can read his Aug. 1 letter to faculty in the [Omen 59.1](#).

Culture Fit

A clash of work cultures between a for-profit company and a radical college could make it harder for Ellucian to find and retain staff and for them to become effective. The other problem is how that company could affect Hampshire’s culture. I spoke with Ann Hackler 77F, via Zoom:

“If you put a new clutch in a 50 year old tractor, it’s not going to work right. Hampshire is a boutique, funky place. That’s what we know. That’s why we like it. Not having IT in-house changes the culture. Think how important IT is and it having a big impact on the culture. It’s giving up the means of production.”

Erikson thinks Ellucian will implement industry-standard solutions and is unsure how well that will serve Hampshire :

“Biggest worry about Ellucian: staff stability; will it be long enough to learn Hampshire? Some IT jobs have a long ramp-up time. For some positions, it takes six months before people learn the environment and can work independently rather than taking up more of the time of the people they are interviewing than they are saving. Outsourcing IT is bad for anyone in higher education, especially Hampshire because the personal relationships and particulars of each individual situation are so important to being able to provide good customer service. I am doubtful about Ellucian and if the cultures mesh together.”

The Negotiation

Many I spoke with complained that no one beyond senior leadership saw the proposal or the contract, nor were part of the negotiation. I searched LinkedIn and Google for the senior leadership and board chair’s professional backgrounds. They have supervisory or technology experience, but I haven’t found any with a background in higher education IT. None of the college’s top leadership was at Hampshire before 2019, which potentially could limit their knowledge of what has been tried or considered in the past and the intricacies of how students, faculty, and departments interacted with IT.

In addition to concerns that the president doesn't involve significant constituencies in critical decisions, the process raises the question of whether there was a knowledge imbalance in the negotiation. One could argue that no one on Hampshire's decision-making and negotiation side fully understood the workings of Hampshire's IT department.

In contrast, EMS has honed its [slide deck](#) and selling points while dealing with well over 100 colleges. They have learned about typical areas of concern for college leaders, such as providing fixed costs and dashboards that give leaders a sense of control. According to one staff meeting attendee, Ellucian's actual product is the "feelings of administrators."

Oversight and Transparency

Wingenbach didn't seek public comment before his final decision. In contrast, WCC had a [public meeting](#) that lasted for three hours. Their Board of Trustees held this meeting, whereas Hampshire's board doesn't hold open meetings.

The organizational chart shows that, in the [former structure](#), IT reported to the Director of Budgets and Planning, and then the VP of Finance and Administration. The new VP of Finance and Administration, [Tana Boone](#), formerly oversaw a [160-person IT department](#) at Dartmouth. However, that's not who Ellucian will be reporting to: Hampshire's Ellucian CIO will report directly to [Wingenbach](#), leaving no one responsible to Hampshire's mission **and** experienced with IT in the position of direct oversight. In contrast, Ellucian is accountable to their own business imperatives, or "a fox guarding the hen house," as mentioned in [public comment at Wachusett Community College \(WCC\)](#).

With documents obtained through public records law, Wachusett Community College Watch compared WCC's expenditures before and after outsourcing. They found that the promised savings didn't materialize – costs increased. Hampshire and Ellucian are not subject to Public Records Act (PRA) requests, including their contract. Note that Wingenbach isn't claiming that IT costs will go down but will go up less than if Hampshire kept IT in-house.

In 2019, non-disclosure agreements shielded the details of Mim Nelson's proposed strategic partnership. Through PRA requests, Dusty Christenson at the Daily Hampshire Gazette eventually unearthed internal discussions at the University of Massachusetts Amherst, showing that Hampshire would be closed if they acquired it, which was what protestors against this decision had suspected.

Wingenbach said that the board chair, Jose Fuentes, and one other trustee advised him. Fuentes declined to answer my questions, stating it was a management decision, and suggested I ask Wingenbach. Wingenbach didn't return my email or voicemail request for an interview. Carl Ries, Vice President for Finance and Administration when Ellucian was chosen, declined to be interviewed. The former IT workers couldn't speak with me because they had signed non-disclosure agreements with the college.

Cybersecurity

Jennifer Chrisler, Hampshire's Chief Advancement Officer, told the [Daily Hampshire Gazette](#), "the IT environment is becoming increasingly complex, with issues such as preserving the security of student data, and Ellucian would provide a level of service the college could not replicate internally."

I interviewed Craig Moss F78 via Zoom. He served on the [Cybersecurity Center of Excellence](#) of the National Institute of Standards and Technology, and is the Executive Vice-President of Ethispher. He is also a Director of the [Cyber Readiness Institute](#), a non-profit that provides free training for organizations and has a free Cyber Leader Certification Program.

Moss says that the core four pillars of cybersecurity are 1) logins: it's crucial to have a "strong password" policy and a minimum of 15 characters; use of passphrases is preferred. According to Microsoft, [95% of hacking incidents could have been prevented by two-factor authentication](#). 2) updating software patches diligently, 3) avoiding phishing, 4) proper file storage/sharing (beware thumb drives as they may have malware pre-installed).

According to Moss, Managed Service Providers (MSPs) like Ellucian may be good at basic IT, like setting up laptops and managing servers but most need to improve at security. On the other hand, Managed **Security** Service Providers (MSSPs) are usually better at that because it's their specialty. While Hampshire may have evaluated Ellucian's security track record, cybersecurity is generally not a solid primary reason for hiring an MSP.

"What often happens is that there then is a huge gap between the perceived responsibility of the MSP and the organization... Good cybersecurity is people, process, and technology. So Hampshire can clearly hire an MSP to do the technology. But they cannot outsource the people and process side..."

Hampshire is responsible for setting a policy and then training the people, both the faculty, the administration, but also the students on these policies...if you think about Hampshire needing to build a culture, that's Hampshire's job, not the MSP's job...

At many colleges, presidents don't:

"have the expertise to be able to ask the CIO the right questions or to establish the right policies...Hampshire should appoint a cyber leader...that's one of the foundational things that we put forth at the Cyber Readiness Institute that's been really successful. So there has to be a person there that is in charge."

Hampshire's relationship to technology is essential for security and from a competitive standpoint. It needs to show that it prepares students for the jobs and society of the future. Jon Reed 86F, is Co-Founder of diginomica and author of books on art, technology, and careers. He states via email:

"Upskilling for cybersecurity was a solvable problem in that context. Unfortunately, they were not given the chance. That now-dismissed IT staff could have been a vital building block in revitalizing Hampshire's approach to cognitive science, AI ethics and algorithmic literacy. Instead this underestimated staff is gone, and Hampshire is even further behind, in an area where it once was a creative, bootstrapping leader. Outsourcing IT is treading water - and the ships of forward-thinking approaches to tech at Hampshire look like they are sailing."

Ellucian had its own security problems in the past. Ellucian's many large accounts with student and financial data, and its venture fund owners' deep pockets may make it an attractive target for hackers. In 2019, The U.S. Department of Education warned that student information was vulnerable at 62 colleges because of a [security flaw in Ellucian's Banner ERP](#). Michigan's Muskegon Community College also has managed IT services from Ellucian. A malware attack caused a [week-long shut-down](#) of the college's network in 2018.

While Hampshire has not disclosed its managed services contract with Ellucian, I obtained Ellucian's contract with WCC. It doesn't include additional staff or insurance coverage in case of an attack. There are hourly rates for additional staff deployments.

Connective Tissue

Wingenbach's June 6 announcement compared outsourcing IT to another department that was outsourced:

"The model is similar to how Health & Counseling Services operate, with staff employed by UMASS but integrated into Hampshire College, with a Senior Director reporting to the VP for Student Affairs."

However, there are differences. Ellucian is a vast, national, for-profit company. IT is woven into the fabric of the rest of the college's operations; it is integral to how staff, students, and faculty work and how individuals and groups communicate with each other. Health Services is primarily for individuals' private appointments for physical or mental health.

Outsourcing hasn't always worked well for Hampshire. In 2013, it [outsourced its dining services](#) to Bon Appetit, which guaranteed jobs for Hampshire dining staff at equal or current pay. In contrast, when Hampshire canceled the contract in 2019 to save money, the staff [weren't guaranteed jobs at Hampshire](#) despite being unionized at Bon Appetit (the only union operating on campus).

Social Justice

According to [Hampshire's website](#), "From its founding, Hampshire College has attracted students who are engaged inside and outside of the classroom with issues of social responsibility, change, and justice." For Ellucian to support these efforts, they would need to provide the right staff and adapt to Hampshire's policy, culture, and ongoing efforts to improve justice, equity, and anti-racism.

One aspect of social justice is respect for gender identity. Discrimination and outdated software have been problems for Ellucian in the past. In 2016, the U.S. Equal Employment Opportunity Commission announced that Ellucian agreed to pay \$140,000 to settle a [finding of discrimination against a transgender employee](#). A contemporary article in Inside Higher Ed, [When Data Don't Fit the Box](#), explains that out-of-date software by Ellucian didn't "accommodate transgender students by letting them choose preferred names and pronouns" and went on to explain how Jeff Butera was able to create a workaround for the software limitations that utilized information collected by various systems at Hampshire. He told Inside Higher Ed, "We want faculty to be successful addressing students the way they want to be addressed."

Values

Recurring concerns surfaced regarding the decision-making process being diametrically opposed to Hampshire's ethos and values, including transparency, collaboration, and fair treatment. Sara Draper, the Sustainability Manager at Hampshire, wrote on the Save Hampshire College IT petition:

"I am angry and disappointed that this decision was made without the input of the people who do this work on our campus, and the people that will be affected. Let me (again) remind the administration that 'transparency' does not mean issuing a statement after the fact- it means letting the community know that an issue is under consideration, creating genuine opportunities for input and feedback, and involving stakeholders in the final decision.

Our IT staff are kind, responsive, overqualified, underpaid, and committed to Hampshire's mission. Listen to their expertise and respect their experience. I'm so tired of Hampshire decision-makers acting as if Hampshire can 'transform higher ed' by using the same broken-system tactics as other schools."

Wingenbach acknowledged in the June 26 staff meeting that, "This process was not handled as well as it should have been and that's my fault." He didn't specify what he would have done differently.

Accessibility

Aaron Ferguson was the Director of The Office of Accessibility Resources and Services (OARS) at Hampshire. His comment on the Save Hampshire College IT petition mentions areas that the financial reports may not reveal:

"As a former staff member in accessibility, I worked with so many amazing IT staff that played an essential role in keeping the Hampshire curriculum and programs accessible in a way no off-campus company could with amazing skill and ingenuity. Good luck getting effective real time captioning integrated with your live stream for events like graduation using an outside vendor."

Equity Ownership

While Hampshire already uses some Ellucian products, contracting with them to manage the college's information technology and work on campus is a major deepening of involvement. Should Ellucian have to meet the same standards as the companies Hampshire invests in? [Hampshire College's investment policy](#) "requires the college to favor investments that do right by the environment, employees, and supply chains, and are governed with transparency and fairness, and to disfavor investments that don't achieve these goals," including those in the fossil fuel industry. Blackstone and Vista Equity Partners own Ellucian. According to [Mother Jones](#), "The Blackstone Group, the world's largest private equity firm, which manages over \$1 trillion, backs 21 energy companies, of which 52 percent are fossil-fuel projects."

Michael Eby writes in [The Nation](#) that "firms like Blackstone have made investments in real estate, energy, and infrastructure to become the world's most crooked landlords and bill collectors." [The New York Times](#) pointed out that "the billionaire founder of Vista Equity Partners, a private equity firm, paid \$139 million to federal authorities to settle one of the biggest tax evasion cases in American history."

According to [Washtenaw Community College Watch](#):

"Typically, once a firm falls into VC ownership, it becomes an unwilling participant in a high-stakes game of musical chairs. The goal of the leveraged VC owner is to flip the company for a profit before the bond payments come due. A leveraged VC owner does not want to get stuck refinancing its upside-down bond debt on a company whose market value has tanked."

Private equity aims to make the company attractive so it can be sold sooner rather than later, emphasizing operational efficiency. Quality may decline, making it unlikely that they will invest in Hampshire beyond the minimum metrics required by the contract.

Cost Savings

If [staffing would be at similar levels](#), as Wingenbach says, how would it save money since Ellucian also has to make a profit? The only way is by having fewer employees on campus, and attempting to fill in the gap with software they use more or less across the board for all their clients instead of Hampshire IT's custom solutions. Call centers and remote experts will supplement on-campus staff, but colleges nationwide share these resources. I interviewed Neil Stillings, Professor Emeritus, Hampshire College, via email:

"I was a founding faculty member of Hampshire College and served four terms as the Dean of the Cognitive Science Program, which included the computer science faculty, facilities, and curriculum. Over the years our faculty and students worked closely with the college's information technology staff to develop and maintain our computing resources and to pursue our teaching and research. It is highly unlikely that the kind of collaboration and collegiality we enjoyed could be maintained with an outside IT contractor. The testimonials from across the college to the intimate support people enjoyed from the in-house IT staff suggests that outsourcing IT was a high-risk decision that damaged a culture of commitment and solidarity in favor of savings that may prove elusive."

Hampshire is known for teaching critical inquiry and thinking, but the outsourcing decision was made without allowing the community to question the assumptions early on. I interviewed Gabe Pofcher 17F, a Hampshire alum and IT teacher, via Zoom:

"Hampshire's administration created a problem by seeing IT as solely a cost center and –to be fair– Hampshire didn't have much money. This was for years on both sides before and after the primary crisis [2019]. IT staff played an important role in students' lives, especially after that point... The way an outsourced firm is set up makes it harder for them so I think we lose a lot of that with the change.

I'm frustrated by the decision-making process. What are the hidden costs of a model like this? What is the size of Ellucian's contract relative to other colleges? What does that mean relative to the quality of service that Hampshire will get and how seriously they will take it?"

Problems Evident

I contacted the three interim Ellucian leaders on Hampshire's campus in hopes of scheduling an interview to discuss their plans. They didn't reply except to note that Jim Pulliam, the Interim CIO, was out for 1-2 weeks in mid-October. The auto-reply to my follow-up message revealed that Steve Budovsky, the Interim Technical Services Director, was gone September 1-18. One of the stated reasons for bringing in Ellucian was the nimbleness of bringing in experts for short periods. However the transition occurred at the beginning of the academic year, which seems a questionable time to be away from campus since that is the time to start work that affects the rest of the year. In December, Lorna Hunt replaced Pulliam; her most recent assignment was at Naropa, and now Pulliam is the Interim CIO there.

One interviewee emailed me after our conversation on November 6 to let me know they received an all-campus email saying that The Hub, where students register for courses, was down (this was the first day of pre-registration for the following semester). I spoke with Margaret Cerullo, Professor of Sociology, Hampshire College, who mentioned an IT problem she was having:

"I had a computer problem. It was a Mac problem. Ellucian rejected my Hampshire login when I tried to contact them; so I phoned. I was put on hold for seven minutes, so I then called the Ellucian emergency line. The person there knew nothing about Macs. I pointed out to him that lots, if not most, people at Hampshire have Macs. He eventually said 'oh there is a note on that,' and googled to find an answer to my problem, but the answer he ended up giving didn't work. He said he would call the hardware department but didn't know if they are on campus. I contacted Kate Macgregor. She gave a very simple fix. Normally this might entail a \$70 battery fix, but that is an expense professors normally aren't used to paying. I also emailed Moodle and then went to Rae Ann Wentworth-Cadieux who said she is not at the college anymore. The verdict is out. Can they get the memo and pick up the slack or will they continue to be incompetent?"

Telegraphed Back in 2019

President Wingenbach's approach to community and making cuts was telegraphed at his [first all campus address](#):

"I believe that everyone who is here now is fully committed to building an independent Hampshire, which means prioritizing the mission and values that make us distinct over any particular programs, interests, units, or communities. We've decided that that's what we're going to do so we have to prioritize that."

The [reprise](#) of his talk on the college's website omitted those points.

The problem was that he wasn't considering cutting communities only as a last resort. He believes he has a mandate to cut almost anything to save the college and continues to run the college in crisis mode. As a result, he looks at specific areas as cost centers without adequately consulting constituencies to understand how these work within the college or considering alternatives. Note that alums weren't allowed to attend this event, which was essentially his inauguration.

Lessons From The Crisis

One could take two major lessons from Hampshire's existential crisis of 2019. The first is that the college shouldn't make decisions like gutting a department or forming major partnerships that alter the college without transparency, shared governance, and buy-in from all major stakeholder groups. The second is that when the stakeholder groups work together, progress happens beyond what the administration could imagine. This model has proven itself repeatedly at Hampshire.

During the 2019 crisis, stakeholder groups self-organized, stopped the acquisition that would have closed Hampshire, re-envisioned for the future, and began fundraising. This work continued at the start of Wingenbach's administration, resulting in a new curriculum, increased enrollment, and more donations. Faculty banded together through the American Association of University Professors to find creative ways to drastically reduce the college's expenditure on faculty while [respecting labor rights and social justice](#).

Hampshire does need to find ways to save money. Part of the original idea for Hampshire, as outlined in [The Making of a College](#), was to show that the cost "of education can be reduced without affecting quality." Hampshire is not fulfilling its purpose of trying new approaches by outsourcing an essential function to a for-profit company. The article in The Chronicle of Higher Education entitled [The Ever-More-Corporate University: Almost nothing on campus is off limits to private equity](#) lays out the extent to which neoliberalism has proliferated in academia.

How to Access Collective Genius

The winning combination unlocking radical change is accessing the community's collective genius while leadership sets the tone regarding timelines and budget targets. Bringing together Hampshire's community of cognitive science, IT, AI, game design, and animation stakeholders on a shared goal with specific targets, free to bring everything to the table, could foster leads for staff and faculty, donations and ambassadorship, and bold, innovative ideas. Hampshire had the first undergraduate program in cognitive science. Think of all the graduates who have gone into the technology industry year after year, including Gary Marcus 86F, an [expert on AI](#), and a leading voice in the global debate on the ethics of responsible AI. In his TEDx Hampshire College talk, "The Art of Facilitation," alum Jay Vogt 72F, reminds us that "People support what they help create."

The [Hechinger Report](#) mentions the formation of new colleges even as other colleges closed, including Northeastern University's Roux Institute, which focuses on technology and garnered \$200 million in donations. The areas of technology mentioned above are in Hampshire's bailiwick and offer opportunities for funding, job opportunities, and growth in student enrollment. There is a vast reservoir of knowledge among current and former students, faculty, staff, and parents. It is hard to imagine Ellucian being able (or willing) to tap into those resources on Hampshire's behalf.

Conclusion

Jennifer Chrisler told the [Gazette](#) that outsourcing to Ellucian is "a strategic investment." However, it may cost more over time as license fees increase and the college becomes locked into their service. Hampshire is a small fish in the sea compared to Ellucian's other customers.

Hampshire's employees were the investment that paid off handsomely. They went above and beyond, building up institutional memory of what works at Hampshire. In contrast, Ellucian staff move from campus to campus according to the company's best interests, not the colleges'.

Part of Hampshire's mission is to disrupt higher ed. Other local colleges created Hampshire to devise new approaches to challenging problems through experimentation. Outsourcing integral departments is the least innovative thing it could be doing – the other colleges hardly need Hampshire to try that out. Hampshire's competitive advantage is its mandate to experiment - and the community of people who have come through its doors as employees and students, which it has helped develop over the decades.

Hampshire's successful experiments don't happen because of autocratic decisions made at the top but through empowering grassroots community members. When Hampshire's community is watered down, it becomes more like other places and loses its advantage. Unfortunately, other decisions are in the works that may do just that - but that's a story for another time.

Hyperlinks in this article can be found at bit.ly/unmakingit

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Good riddance: An ode to 2023

By Tyler Clupny

Dear 23,

I hope the world forgets you, because I never will.

You've turned my life into a nightmare that doesn't seem to end, no matter how many times I wake up, or how many times I wish I didn't.

You've taken so much from me, and still I see the way you want to ask for more.

Tell my mom I miss her, I hear the afterlife is nice this time of year. And while you're at it, give the message to Grampa too. Tell him I learned to sew like he always wanted, and tell mom that I finished the Christmas shopping that she couldn't.

Don't tell them the way I'm breaking here without them, that I'm holding on so tight to what's left that it's tearing me apart.

You've taken more friends than I can count, but I suppose you already knew that. Maybe you thought that with all of my practice in losing, one more wouldn't hurt..or 3..or 5.

But, 23, I want you to know that you can't stop me. I'm stronger than you think. Than anyone thinks. I know that now.

I'm the strength of those still with me, and the memory of those who aren't.

I'm my mother's fighter and my grandfather's wit.

And I'm far too stubborn to know when to quit.

So good riddance, don't let the door hit you on the way out.

Because when January comes and I say goodbye to you forever, I'll be ready for whatever 24 has in store.

Sincerely,

The spite that you've created.



An explicitly Jewish statement of support for Palestine and pro-Palestinian staff, students and faculty because the Daily Digest took a pro-Israel statement from a student but wouldn't take a countering view

By Juniper Balbus-Holmquist

I wanna share my thoughts on and my unique positioning around the current isreali-Gaza conflict (really should be termed the Gazan Genocide) and show my full, loving unconditional support for the true decolonizing, deprogramming and brave teachers of this week's staff statement that I believe has been opportunisticly mischaracterized for people's comfort-- namely because to isreal-supporters-- there is no current position of defense that is not to me, paranoid-schizoid in the psychoanalytic sense.

First a bit about me:

.. strictest actuality I'm a baptised and communized but not confirmed (planning on it-- especially after legal name change-- and i'd take the name Hildegard after Hildegard de Bingen) Catholic and a bar/bat mitzvahed Jew. No one can take that away from me-- and yes I get twice the presents-- and yes I have a 12-14 foot christmas tree in my Greektown, Chicago loft and a mutli-generation owned menorah-- is it hard? not one bit--

until--- people make me take sides or say "all jews are zionists" or "not liking Israel is anti semitic"-- for many Jews especially in the midwest these arguments of blood and opinion quanta have become ever-familiar and painful often from the wealthy, the suburban and the older. (I should note I have a fully Jewish half-sister married to her half-Italian/half-Palestinian wife)

WE AT HAMPSHIRE KNOW ESSENTIALIST DEFINITIONS of jew in opinion on Israel is relatively or even very useless and quite dangerous.

but the world doesn't (or ummm honestly a small but loud section of this campus)

and it hurts

For years I was a two-state solution person-- and while I understand why that's a common position among the pro-peace/BDS Jewish-american left, (and I want to dispute the notion that BDS is incompatible with two-state cause you can starve out the current regime in favor of still maintaining a Jewish prescence-- even if it's okay to not want one) I want to explain why a single (to varying degrees-- still working it out in progress) multiethnic state is the best option-

1. it's too far gone-- palestinian landback to 1946 borders is either impossible (I mean limited functionally not nessecarily impossible to imagine) or unwieldy (due to discontinuity due to settlements)

2.. a two-state solution would argue over the title of holder of jerusalem endlessly and absent of a UN protectorate there is no good option-- in a two-state solution even if we legislate dual access to all of Jerusalem and the two current parties agree OPEC/Iran/Lebanon might still war.

3. the only valid justification of israel that has ever at any point moved me is it exists to remember and protect the 6 million souls desecrated in the name of land expansion and racial ethnic superiority (the holocaust protectorate position)

4. However--- now Israel looks poised to take 2-3 million lives with it-- genocide by the genocided rings very true of the wars around serbia in the 1990s-2000s where Serbian elements used Nazi cooperation between Germany and Croatia to commit then large scale genocide of Croatsians as well as Kosovo-albanians, Bosniak Muslims and more-- becuase apparently just like mentally ill teenagers people would rather oppress and kill back than consider that eye for eye is less advanced than a bonobo (seriously they are the epitome of make love not war) -- maybe the radical 60s psychologists claiming that insanity is a rational response to insane world were even more prescient than I already thought-- and: it's impossible to entirely condemn resistance and a violent response to oppression even if I would prefer if it didn't exist for the following reasons 1: as a queer person I am free because drag queens threw bricks at cops 2: riots are the language of the unheard and revolution is violent 3: the us involvement in contesting the soviets lead to 9/11 and we well funded elements of the bin Laden family as contractors and architects.. the US involvement in the gulf war lead to saddam Hussein's strengthening, and our support for Israel lead to Hamas because PLO was taken unseriously. I think this is really important that we focus equally if not more on isreal's violent misrepresentation of Judiaism's core love than Hamas's misrepresentation of Islam's core love

5. Hamas isn't Great, but neither was Gadaffi, neither was Zulu/Xhosa fighting in the wake of

South African end-apartheid-- but you know what they fought BACK-- that's different than ethnic cleansing, war crimes and genocide by a currently majoritized (at least in NATO aligned countries) ethnoreligious group against a currently minoritized one.. please refer to part two of point 4. I will also state that to be clear a comparison to Gadaffi or especially ANC is incomplete because Hamas is Jew-eradacist not just anti-Zionist... this is a point about violence in response to oppression not that Hamas is as pretty or as right as any of the aforementioned-- it's unfortunate that the best Palestinian state leadership wants all Jews categorically dead-

- you could also say the best leadership of the Jewish state wants all Palestinians or maybe even all Arabs/Muslims categorically dead-- both are genocidal in some or many ways however one is coming from current pain one is causing that pain-- I would never insinuate that Hamas is a utopia but I think it's important to note that Israel has a right to self-defense people should at the very least if unable to deny that mistruth say that Hamas has the right to defend itself after 78 years of Nakba-- at least equate if you can't understand further as I do.

6. Isreal is making the definition of Jew so narrow that most of my Jewish brothers and sisters would not belong there-- you can only convert under an orthodox rabbi even if you are reform, conservative or renewal... you can only be considered married in a court or by an orthodox, not to mention that Israel is portrayed as a gay utopia when marriage isn't even legal for same-sex couples and Jordan for example will probably become more gay friendly than Israel as the latter continues to democratic backslide. Progressive/leftist Jews should not change their positioning on religiosity or apartheid or orthodoxy or international socialism to belong in "their" state-- a Jewish state-- the notion that Israel isn't all-Jewish is entirely separate but also reinforcing from general anti-Zionist sentiment.

7. Netanyahu supporters or whatever non-total/non-absolutist/non-all-Jews-support-isreal definition you want to use are complicit in the racializing of Jewish People out of an ethnoreligious group state... by essentially defining in beliefs on Israel, beliefs on Jewish law, and then legalistically justifying that --- they have led to a WHAT IS A JEWISH PERSON that rings incredibly both McCarthyist and fascist-- with genuine undertones of both de boer South Africa and as much as it's controversial-- Nazi Germany. it's ethno/religious/racial conflationist apartheid. [please take this charitably-- if impossible for you to limited case compare Germany and Israel read as if I am Jonathan swift saying "boil and eat human babies"]

8. with that being said to blame that on ALL Jews is reductionist, mean and incorrect in the same way as to reduce Serbians to Milensovič would be to erase Želimir Želnik or Boris A. Novak's politics in favor of Peter Handke.

9. the repression of belief on college campuses is disgusting-- if a Jew critical of Israel is self-hating in the infamous words of the self-hating Jew list, and a non-jew critical of Israel a Nazi, didn't you just call dozens or hundreds of living survivors of the Holocaust the world's most self-hating Jews? To make this line of thought even more uncomfortable would there be any Jews without self-hating Germans... any Armenians without self-hating Turks? Any Bosnians and Albanians without self-hating Serbs?

10. I end with my poem to this end in excerpt sections

[excerpt 1:]

i am a proud self-hating jew

becuase in lifes before i was a self hating serb, a self hating turk, a self hating german

[excerpt 2:]

nothing is more interminably grating than

your culturally specific right to culturally specific genocide in culturally specific ways

that the international community culturally specifically gives to each culture specifically as a litle treat once or twice

it is important that an open forum forever be truly open, that dissent is welcomed in the left, and that the syntheses, dialectics, and poststructuralism are well understood, situated and written with a radical love and optimism not a reactionism. I am always more than willing to talk to all elements with feelings on this in a face-to-face, open and dicourse way that is not reactionary. This is my current application of Tikkun Olam... it may change... I'm 19 and emotional but this is what I have intuited from my lineage-- the Talmud says that the humanity of all peoples comes before any rabbinic command. Take that as you will. This is my reading.

signed,

Juniper Balbus-Holmquist

F23

She/they

[author's note for editors.... If this is unpublishable I totally see why... but I also made a great effort to make this amenable to academic discourse and within scholarly bounds.. given that the Omen is generally quite free, although getting less free, my hope is you will take the editorial risk.. granted that I would just publish in a National or regional left-wing journal anyways).



Every Song in Glee and Whether or not it's better than the Original: The Christmas Special

By Finch Arnold

Happy Christmas dear Glee Project readers. It's the merriest time of the year, and I'm not even saying that facetiously. While roughly 80% of my interests are ironic, I do genuinely enjoy the Christmas season with no caveats. I've probably thought more about Christmas music than anyone really ought to, which probably doesn't surprise anyone. Interestingly, we will be covering quite a few album-only songs today that were never actually in an episode, a first for the project. Also, a few characters will technically be debuting here, in particular the cast of seasons 4 and 5, but I will be largely withholding my opinion on said characters until their proper debut, so as to avoid spoilers. I'm a lot like River Song if you think about it. Now, this article features a large number of songs with no proper "original performer". For such songs, I will be using the most iconic cover of the song. I define the most iconic cover as whichever cover appears first when I search it on Spotify.

Volume 1 (Season 2, Episode 10: A Very Glee Christmas)

Song: We Need A Little Christmas, originally performed by Angela Lansbury

Glee Performer: Kurt, Mercedes, and Tina

Winner: Glee

There's just a certain quality of Christmas-ness that's lacking in the original, it's just a bit slow, entirely too dour for the season.

Song: Deck The Halls/Up On the Housetop, originally performed by Nat King Cole/Gene Autry

Glee Performer: New Directions

Winner: Original/Glee

On the album, this is referred to as "Deck The Rooftop" for some odd reason but I have elected to refer to it in the same manner that I use for other mashups. Now, as much as I criticized the last song for being a bit dull, there is such a thing as doing a little *too* much and this definitely does. However, Autry's version falls into the same pitfalls of We Need A Little Christmas and is frankly tedious.

Song: Merry Christmas Darling, originally performed by Carpenters

Glee Performer: Rachel Berry

Winner: Original

I don't think I've ever had such an immediate visceral negative reaction to a song as the Glee version of this. It's not even that bad, but the quality gap is MASSIVE.

Song: Baby It's Cold Outside, originally performed by Frank Loesser and Lynn Garland

Glee Performer: Kurt Hummel and Blaine Warbler

Winner: Glee

I perhaps should've used a different version of this, since, while it's the original, it's awful and utterly un-iconic. It's totally dated and the instrumental is basically three notes on repeat. Glee could do absolutely anything (as long as Mr. Schue wasn't involved) and still win.

Song: The Most Wonderful Day of the Year, originally performed by Rudolph the Red-Nosed Reindeer

Glee Performer: New Directions

Winner: Original

I don't really know what to do with this one. Something about the weird funeral dirge-esque intro in the original song really speaks to me, though, and the Glee version lacks that magic.

Song: Last Christmas, originally performed by Wham!

Glee Performer: Rachel Berry, Mercedes Jones, and Finn Hudson

Winner: Original

I heard the Glee version of Last Christmas on the radio once, it was terrifying. I was just listening to Delilah as I do, and then suddenly, Lea Michelle's dulcet tones filled the air. Do you know how unsettling it is to hear Rachel Berry when you aren't expecting to? It's unsettling enough when you *are* expecting her. Last Christmas is actually secretly absolutely incredible, and this cover, which is actually not that bad, lacks any sort of transcendence.

Song: God Rest Ye Merry Gentlemen, originally performed by Nat King Cole

Glee Performer: New Directions Girls

Winner: Original

It's all just a bit much, isn't it? Five performers all doing way too much is a bit uncalled for.

Song: O Christmas Tree, originally performed by Aretha Franklin

Glee Performer: Will Schuester

Winner: Original

The harder Schue tries, the worse he sounds, and when he starts really getting into it towards the end of the song, it just sounds forced and awful. I never want to listen to this again.

Song: Jingle Bells, originally performed by Frank Sinatra

Glee Performer: New Directions Boys

Winner: Original

This one reminds me of the Madagascar Christmas movie for reasons I can't possibly justify. Any of you watched Merry Madagascar? I think it holds up. Anyhow, this is another example of the show overdoing it. I just don't think Jingle Bells should be turned into such a production.

Song: You're A Mean One, Mr. Grinch, originally performed by Thurl Ravenscroft

Glee Performer: Will Schuester and (I'm not joking) k.d. lang

Winner: Original

The Glee version is like half monologue so it would lose even if I didn't have beef with Schue.

Song: Angels We Have Heard On High, originally performed by The Mormon Tabernacle Choir

Glee Performer: Mercedes Jones

Winner: Glee

Mercedes hits an absolutely crazy vocal run towards the end of this one and that's all the justification I really feel that I need here.

Song: O Holy Night, originally performed by Celine Dion

Glee Performer: Rachel Berry

Winner: Original

This is not actually in the Christmas episode, which is a bit odd, yes. Rachel, who is Jewish, chose to sing a Christmas song just 'cause. Now, Dion's version is simultaneously more understated *and* more powerful, because, unlike Rachel, she's capable of some degree of nuance in her voice. Also, she just does the high note at the end way better.

Song: Welcome Christmas, originally performed by The Whos (the ones down in Whoville, not the ones that did Pinball Wizard)

Glee Performer: New Directions

Winner: Original

The Glee version put the word "glee" in its lyrics (it's not in the other version) and it angered me to such an extent that I'm giving it the loss.

Volume 2 (Season 3, Episode 9: Extraordinary Merry Christmas)

Song: All I Want For Christmas Is You, originally performed by Mariah Carey

Glee Performer: Mercedes Jones

Winner: Original

I don't like dissing Mercedes so I'm going to blame the backup singers here, they're not nearly as good as Mariah's.

Song: Santa Baby, originally performed by Eartha Kitt

Glee Performer: Santana Lopez

Winner: Original

Thank god they gave this one to Santana because she's the only one who can do this song justice. Anyone ever thought about how Santana is two letters away from Santa? I do think it's just a bit less effortless than Eartha Kitt's version though.

Song: Little Drummer Boy, originally performed by Katherine Davis

Glee Performer: Artie Abrams

Winner: Original

I don't fancy the arrangement they used here, it doesn't work well with Artie's voice I feel.

Song: River, originally performed by Joni Mitchell

Glee Performer: Rachel Berry

Winner: Original

Rachel's biggest weakness, other than oversinging in absolutely every single one of her songs, is sounding the same in all of her numbers. Her voice has no depth, and is boring, and has no complexity or breadth of emotion. On a positive note, the original is pretty excellent and is going directly on my Christmas playlist.

Song: Do You Hear What I Hear, originally performed by Whitney Houston

Glee Performer: Harmony Nocanon-Lastname (this joke will make sense in like 3 months) and Unique Adams

Winner: Glee

Don't get attached to Harmony, she has like two other songs. SHE's great though, should've gotten to be a recurring character.

Song: Let It Snow, originally performed by Vaughn Monroe

Glee Performer: Blaine Warbler and Kurt Hummel

Winner: Glee

Another one where the rules really flatter the Glee iteration. I don't love Glee's version, I think they're overdoing it again, but it's better than the languid original. This is because the original is from World War II.

Song: My Favorite Things, originally performed by The Sound of Music

Glee Performer: Blaine Warbler, Kurt Hummel, Mercedes Jones, and Rachel Berry

Winner: Original

This is not a Christmas song, it was never a Christmas song, and I will die on this hill. One thing about Julie Andrews is that she really sells that these are in fact a few of her favorite things. There's a sense of urgency lacking in Glee, I doubt that they're being sincere about their fondness for brown paper packages.

Song: Santa Claus Is Coming To Town, originally performed by Bruce Springsteen

Glee Performer: Finn Hudson, Joe Hart, and Noah Puckerman

Winner:

I've heard the original version an absurd amount of times and somehow I never knew it was by Springsteen. The Glee cover reminds me a lot of Nickelback for some reason. Just so *abrasive*, it's like brillo.

Song: Christmas Wrapping, originally performed by The Waitresses

Glee Performer: Brittany S. Pierce

Winner: Original

Brittany just doesn't have the vocal oomph I'd want from her.

Song: Blue Christmas, originally performed by Elvis

Glee Performer: Rory Flanagan

Winner: Original

Rory has yet to do a single song that doesn't leave me bored to tears. He's made me give a win to ELVIS PRESLEY and for that he will never be forgiven.

Song: Do They Know It's Christmas, originally performed by Band Aid

Glee Performer: New Directions

Winner: Glee

The harmonies are better.

What? Were you expecting more? Man, there are only so many ways I can praise or criticize a song! Some of them just aren't very inspiring at this point. Now get out of my house.

Volume 3 (Season 4, Episode 10: Glee, Actually)

Song: Jingle Bell Rock, originally performed by Bobby Helms

Glee Performer: Sam Evans

Winner: Original

The original Jingle Bell Rock has aged *very* well. It's vintage in the best way possible. And Sam's version is, like every other Sam song, okay I guess.

Song: White Christmas, originally performed by Bing Crosby

Glee Performer: Blaine Warbler and Kurt Hummel

Winner: Original

Christmas: the one time of year where gay people get more duets than straight people. This one is just so shallow. Bing Crosby's voice is deep and rich, while Blaine's is utterly superficial.

Song: Have Yourself A Merry Little Christmas, originally performed by Judy Garland

Glee Performer: New Directions

Winner: Original

This article more than any other has imbued me with an appreciation for subtlety, something the Glee cast is consistently low on.

Song: Silent Night, originally performed by Carpenters

Glee Performer: Santana Lopez

Winner: Original

I do not care for Silent Night. It insists upon itself. Karen Carpenter and Santana Lopez are two of my favorite vocalists, and yet neither song does anything for me. The Glee version is especially glacial, so it loses.

Song: Joy To The World, originally performed by Nat King Cole

Glee Performer: Unique Adams

Winner: Glee

Let this be a sneak peak of how utterly excellent Unique is.

Song: The First Noel, originally performed by Andy Williams

Glee Performer: Marley Rose

Winner: Glee

Let this be a sneak peak of how utterly excellent Marley is.

Song: I'll Be Home For Christmas, originally performed by Bing Crosby

Glee Performer: Rachel Berry

Winner: Original

I would actively rather listen to the Camilla Cabello version.

Song: Feliz Navidad, originally performed by José Feliciano

Glee Performer: Artie Abrams

Winner: Original

Maybe the most petty critique so far, but the Glee version is just *slightly* too fast, and it's really throwing me off. Just enough to be really off putting.

Song: Hanukkah, Oh Hanukkah, originally performed by (for some reason) The Barenaked Ladies

Glee Performer: Jake Puckerman and Noah Puckerman

Winner: Original

Yes, they do in fact use The Barenaked Ladies' arrangement. I don't like Jake or Puck's voices, you've heard me trash Puck more than enough and Jake always sounds congested.

Song: Happy Xmas (War Is Over), originally performed by John Lennon and Yoko Ono

Glee Performer: Finn Hudson

Winner: Original

This is one of the few times that I feel that a chorus of children actually makes a song *better*.

Volume 4 (Season 5, Episode 8: Previously Unaired Christmas)

Song: Here Comes Santa Claus, originally performed by Bing Crosby

Glee Performer: Kurt Hummel, Santana Lopez, and Rachel Berry

Winner: Glee

I'm just not crazy about Bing Crosby, most of the time! It's just such a dated sound.

Song: Rockin' Around The Christmas Tree, originally performed by Brenda Lee

Glee Performer: New Directions

Winner: Original

Glee can never use a normal arrangement of anything for some reason. I do like the very brief snippet of Marley at the song's end but that isn't exactly enough to generate a good song.

Song: Mary's Little Boy Child, originally performed by Boney M.

Glee Performer: Unique Adams, Marley Rose, and Tina Cohen-Chang

Winner: Glee

Now, I'd consider myself pretty well versed in Christmas music, perhaps a bit too much so. But I have never in my life heard of this song. I like Boney M. as much as the next guy, but I'm pretty lukewarm on this one.

Song: The Chipmunk Song, originally performed by Alvin and the Chipmunks

Glee Performer: Cody Tolentino, Kurt Hummel, Rachel Berry, and Santana Lopez

Winner: Original

Don't worry about Cody Tolentino. I don't know who he is either. Anyways, this is just kind of inane, not really worth discussion.

Song: Love Child, originally performed by Diana Ross and the Supremes

Glee Performer: Unique Adams, Marley Rose, and Tina Cohen-Chang

Winner: Glee

This is the last time Marley will sing on this show and we haven't even covered her first song yet. It's a "Ghost Of Christmas Yet To Come" sort of vibe. Some of you may be saying that this isn't a Christmas song and you're objectively correct but it's in a Christmas episode and on the Christmas album so I sort of have to cover it. It's very hard to do it better than Diana Ross, but you know what? Alex Newell pulls it off!

Song: Away In A Manger, originally performed by Nat King Cole

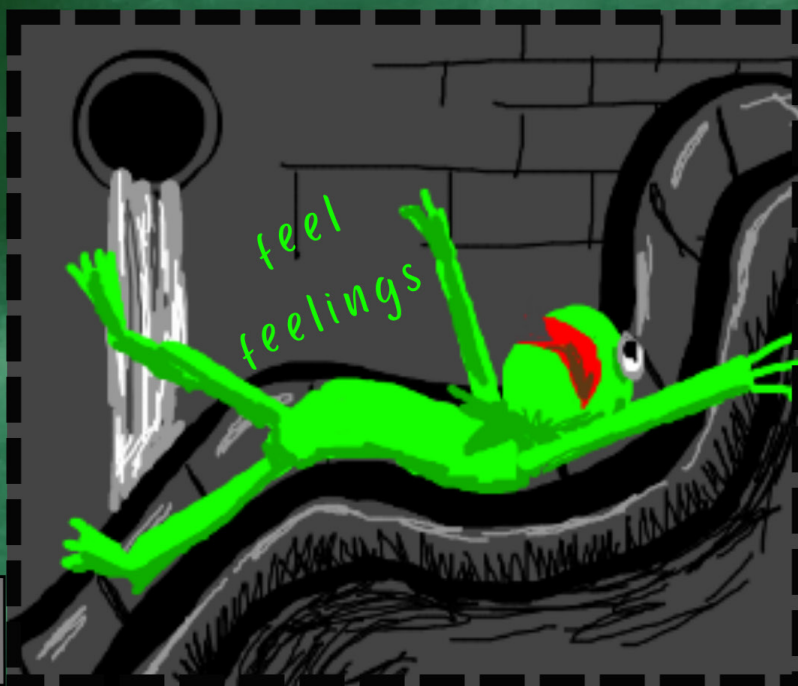
Glee Performer: New Directions

Winner: Original

These both are just about to put me to sleep. Nat King Cole's voice is certainly more suited for this sort of song than the entire Glee ensemble, I'll tell you that much.

Happy Holidays, Glee Project readers. Unfortunately 

HAS HAMPSHIRE EVER MADE YOU



Share any positive,
neutral, or negative
stories you have
about different
Hampshire locations.
(For my art project)



Realistic Hampshire by Hali Young



Please Play Laika Aged through Blood

By Nicholas Utakis-Smith

Content warning: The game I am recommending states that “This game contains depictions of extreme acts of violence towards children and suicide, and mention of sexual assault, which some players may find distressing.” I don’t touch on any of these topics in my review, but if you are sensitive to these things, I recommend being a bit more cautious about purchasing the game. If you are sensitive to cartoon gore, gun violence, or animal death, I also recommend avoiding the trailers or demo for this game.

I’m going to spend the rest of this essay trying to convince you that the motorcycle-metroidvania video game *Laika: Aged through Blood* (created by indie studio *Brainwash Gang*) is well worth the \$20 it costs (or the \$16 bucks I got it for on sale). But ultimately, my convincing you of the price is unnecessary. The game’s demo is free on steam, and in my opinion, a great indicator of what the rest of the game is like. It showcases the game’s difficult motorcycle-bullet-time-gunfighting-action mechanics, gently teaches you these mechanics so that they end up feeling easy by the end. It gives you a chance to feel really awesome as you defeat the first boss by vaulting over it, shooting it, backflipping to reload, blocking the bullets with your motorcycle, landing, and repeating until it’s dead. And it introduces you to the key elements of the game’s story: The struggle of a small tribe of anthropomorphic foxes trying to survive as a seemingly endless army of anthropomorphic birds destroy the land the foxes live on to build inhuman (in-animal?) death machines, and the struggle the main character faces between avenging the people she’s lost and protecting her daughter from being exposed to this violence. The only aspect of the game that the demo doesn’t really cover is the open-world metroidvania aspects of the game.

I also recommend listening to the soundtrack on spotify or youtube even if you don’t end up playing the game, although I don’t know how to talk about music as well as I do video games so my review of that is a lot shorter. The soundtrack is way more reflective of the story than it is of the gameplay, making you feel more like someone struggling to break generational trauma while watching everyone around them die more than it makes you feel like you’re doing sick motorcycle tricks while taking down a fucked up bird tank. It’s also really interesting to see a game soundtrack that is mostly lyrical songs, especially in an indie game, but I think it works for what *Laika* does.

First off, *Laika*’s fundamental mechanics are hard, but it rarely feels unfair. The game *wants* you to master its systems. One of the core mechanics, for example, is that in order to reload your gun (which starts with only two shots per clip), you need to perform a backflip on your motorcycle. The game starts off by putting singular enemies in front of you, giving you plenty of space in between to attempt backflips, and plenty of checkpoints if you fuck up and crash. This space in between enemies gradually gets smaller as you progress through the tutorial, until you encounter 3 pairs of enemies in a row, each split up by a single ramp that you can use to perform a backflip. You still aren’t reloading in combat, but the game expects you to perform the backflip and hit both of your shots consistently (although if you miss a shot you can use your parry to potentially take out one of the enemies). Then, the game puts 6 enemies at once in front of you, essentially treating the encounter like a puzzle of figuring out where you’ll have the opportunity to backflip while under fire. The first boss of the game can technically be defeated by just vaulting up the ramp firing a shot or two, reloading, landing, and repeating, since its attacks are not particularly threatening. By the time I got to this boss I found myself comfortable enough with this system that I felt like I could go beyond the bare minimum the game was requiring of me and backflipping multiple times per ramp jump.

The game’s exploration also helps to integrate the story into the gameplay naturally, so that I’d naturally encounter the parts of the level the game wanted me to encounter. In one section, your mission is to deliver someone’s ashes to a burial site.

In addition to this, Laika (the character you play as) has also promised to get her daughter a flower so that she can build a wreath, as a way of coping with loss that will distract her from the violence being imposed upon her by the tribe's current situation. It just so happens that the specific flower type she wants grows at the burial site you were going to anyway. So when I played, I delivered the ashes fairly easily, but was told about a strange problem where the trees at this burial site are dying, and was given a new quest to solve that. I found that the birds had been deforesting the site, killing the trees and destroying the flowers you were trying to get, and it was surprisingly easy to take them all down. That solved the problem of the dying trees, but I still want to find the flower. So I went deeper into the burial site, and there I encountered the game's second boss, who dropped the flower after defeating it. I still haven't completed the game at the time of writing, so I don't know if that boss is optional or not, but I found it deeply compelling, how, rather than the game saying "you need to go here and fight this boss" the bossfight emerged naturally as a result of me acting on Laika (the character)'s motivations.

In conclusion, *Laika* is a beautiful story with gameplay elements that make you feel more connected to the characters in that story, and it manages to also be a game where you get to do cool stunts on a motorcycle and feel awesome about it. I strongly recommend at least playing the demo, if not buying the full game. As I mentioned, at time of writing I haven't beaten this game yet (I'm still only at the beginning of the game) but I'm hoping someone else will read this, check the game out, and I'll be able to talk with them about how cool it is.



SynthV News December 2023 (Unfocused Rambling)

By Jess Lin Jiménez

I don't care. To be honest, I don't care. I don't really care to be honest because Kiyoteru is coming to SynthV. There is no blade that can cut me. No water that can drown me. No fire that can burn me. No threat of failing a course that can tickle even one of my sweat glands. Not interested. Don't care.

Snapshot of the news:

1. Eri, a female Japanese rap vocal, was released for SynthV in October and is currently my favorite Lite voice.
2. AHS Announced three days ago on December 1st, 2023 that Kiyoteru and Miki are scheduled to receive SynthV voices in 2024, marking their fifteenth anniversary.
3. SynthV GUMI is in the works and is scheduled for release on December 20th, 2023!
4. I bought a CD by Kiyoteru's voice provider, Kiyoshi Hiyama. Seems like the recordings don't exist online and neither do many of his other works, so I had to have it.

Eri

About two weeks ago if I created a document called "SynthV News," I would have written all about my newfound love of Eri, SynthV's first and only female rap vocal + first and only Japanese rap vocal. Remember, the other major vocal synthesis engines don't even have rap vocals yet.

You can tune any of them to sound like they're rapping, but they aren't specialized for it.

Also, Eri is easily the most high quality Lite vocal I've heard. I cannot believe that voice is free. I know she's part of the line specially made to show off how awesome Dreamtonic's software is but so is Saki and her Lite voice doesn't come anywhere near the quality of Eri's. I enjoy the sound of Eri's singing more than her rapping, but that's just a personal thing. It sounds prettier to me. Also, she sounds so lovely when singing with Teto and Saki!

Kiyoteru and Kiyoshi – Rock and Jazz?

Kiyoteru (second favorite VOCALOID) is coming to SynthV along with Miki. I already expressed some of my excitement but you'll have to imagine the rest because it's time to move on to the serious stuff. What was up with VOCALOID Kiyoteru? I'm not talking about the very detailed, sometimes disturbing official bios of the ICE MOUNTAIN members. I'm talking about why Kiyoteru has a voicebank dedicated to rock and not one for jazz when the latter is what his voice provider (Kiyoshi Hiyama) seems to specialize in. Sure, it makes the vocaloid more marketable. The story it all plays into is really funny too (best part: apparently, Kiyoteru canonically cannot maintain that cool rock star look or sound because he needs to put on his glasses or else he'll get eye strain). However, it seems like such a waste of potential. Kiyoshi Hiyama's voice is so pretty and soothing - great for slow ballads that lean more into jazz or rnb styles. It's one of those that kind of draws you in and calmly pulls you along with it until the song ends and you're left wanting more. I have no doubt that SynthV Kiyoteru will be able to take on jazz songs with no problem just like his voice provider. (Just a thought: The cute, geeky charm of the vocaloid sound might be lost in SynthV vocals because Kiyoshi Hiyama doesn't sound how you'd imagine a geeky manga character with glasses to sound.)

Because the geekiness will still exist in the vocaloid versions, it will be a win either way so I welcome the realism SynthV will undoubtedly bring.)

SynthV GUMI

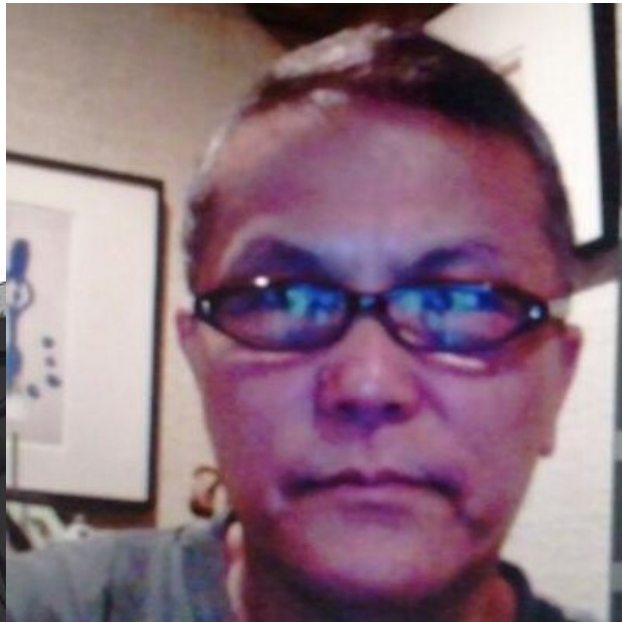
SynthV GUMI. What more could be said? Gosh, it's so painful. I remember feeling so excited and proud when VOCALOID released GUMI V6 AI and she sounded so "good" and "clear"... but that was by VOCALOID standards, wasn't it? Listening to GUMI V6 compared to **just the demo songs** of SynthV AI GUMI just makes it so absolutely clear that VOCALOID is not in this race anymore. SynthV Gumi is not even out yet. This is entirely too embarrassing and entirely too avoidable on VOCALOID's part, or should I say Yamaha? I've said it for a long time now that VOCALOID fell from grace due to its own negligence and I could spend all day getting into it so I won't, but yeah. That monopoly they got so comfortable with doesn't exist anymore. There was a moment when inabakumori released "Yoyuyoku" and I heard Kazehikiβ. I was like, "Wait... this is really really good. Maybe they can-" and then Eri comes out six days later and GUMI gets a SynthV, followed by Kiyoteru and Miki. It's kind of over for now. They lost Miku and the rest of the Crypton Six. GUMI was the most popular vocal they had in the wake of Crypton's departure. Last year they quietly released V6 and no one really cared after about a three weeks because the only worthwhile feature it introduced was VOCALCHANGE and not only had this sort of technology already been used (for FREE!) for years by the vocaloid community through Vocalshifter (interesting name coincidence), but it also wasn't that great because you couldn't edit the output. I don't know if they fixed that but like... guys, come on.

So anyway give me my SynthV Gakupo like I've been asking for. I see GACKT has started releasing YT videos again and seems to be doing fairly well so can we get on that? More than happy to help out in anyway I can; just send me a quick email and it's done.

That's basically it because I wanted to keep it short but there's some things about Kiyoteru and Kiyoshi Hiyama that I wanted to say.

Kiyoteru Hiyama's voice provider is Kiyoshi Hiyama. Because of the name similarities, I will call Kiyoteru by that name and the voice provider by "Mr. Hiyama". For a really long time, it was surprisingly hard to find information on Mr. Hiyama (at least for me). Even searching his name pulled up a bunch of links relating to Kiyoteru instead which is really weird and uncommon in my experience. I do understand that they share the surname "Hiyama" and the name of Kiyoteru's father in canon is "Kiyoshi Hiyama" but the voice provider is like, a real guy. Some of the links that came up didn't even mention him. Google seems to recognize the existence of the vocaloid (and its "father" that has no presence in anything beyond an official bio for the mascot of a fake voice) more than the living person that provided the real voice that the vocaloid is based on. That's... something.

Mr. Hiyama wrote and performed an insert song for an anime called "1-gatsu ni wa Christmas," or "Christmas in January". It was the only work of his I could find online for a long time. I found that he had an album of jazz covers but I couldn't find any digital copies of even a single track, so I bought the CD this fall. It's called "Scent of Voices", has twelve tracks, and shows off how pretty Kiyoshi's voice is. What range! It's such a lovely collection and it's too bad it's not online anywhere. I think it will be awesome to try to cover some of the songs in the album with Kiyoteru's SynthV, especially the acapella tracks. Also, the album really makes me want to hear Kiyoshi do an acapella cover of Sachiko Kumagai's "Fuyu no Hanabi" / "Winter Fireworks". I would want the cover to be the arrangement Hyadain made for his own wonderful cover of the song.



Left: The official illustration of Kiyoteru Hiyama V4 Natural by Umetani Ataro. I haven't seen that the SynthV will use a different depiction. | Right: Kiyoshi Hiyama. I haven't seen anything that seems like an official headshot or anything. Every photo of him on Google Image basically looks just like this and they're scattered in a sea of drawings of Kiyoteru.



on love, lark, and language barriers

By Leo Zhang

At the end of my second month in Japan, I found myself in a TGI Friday's in Shibuya. If you asked me why, I don't think I'd be able to explain, at least not well; it was a mix of convenience and homesickness, I think. I'd never been to Friday's before then, but I figured it would be nice to be in a distinctly American place, where the staff could probably speak English and the food would probably be as greasy and heavy as American food tends to be, so I could really feel like I was back home. (I've since found out that that's true, and that I don't really like Friday's food.)

It was there that I met a bartender. When I met him, he was dressed as a clown, or maybe a mime, for Halloween. He had white and black face paint on, a white button-up as opposed to the normal Friday's uniform, and a ruffly red collar around his neck that looked more like a lion's mane than anything else. And he was warm and friendly, and he had this lovely smile, and I thought he was beautiful, even with the makeup, even with the collar. I told him this at the end of my visit, and he laughed and asked, "Really?" and I nodded emphatically and he told me to come back someday to see what he looked like without makeup on and his name, he told me, was Lark.

Maybe if I was someone else, someone who was fine to leave invitations like those as they are, I would've gone home and not thought about it again. But instead I became determined to see him again, because—well, he invited me to. And I did see him again, eventually, and I found out what he looked like without makeup on.

And I kept going back. I would sit at the bar, right in front of his dishwashing station, and we would chat in broken English-Japanese about what we do, our experiences with art, and friendship.

I learned that his name isn't really Lark, that "Lark" is the brand of cigarettes he likes the most, that everyone working at that Friday's has an English name they go by when they're on the job. (He said it's because Friday's is an American company, but I don't really think that's standard even for American companies—and, now that I think about it, two of his coworkers are called Nappa and Sasuke, so it's not even standard for Shibuya's TGI Friday's, either.) I learned that he used to work at a lounge and that he hated it. I learned that he used to be lonely and anxious, but that he now finds great fulfillment in being able to make his friends happy with his smile. His whole family does sports, and he has two jobs, and his favorite drink is water, with beer as a close second.

He's the kind of person who naturally exudes warmth, and I've found that those people are rare—or at least, I don't encounter them that often. Friendly people? Sure. Nice people? Met plenty of those. But Lark's specific brand of softness is a very special kind of softness. He treats everyone he meets with kindness as if it's easy, as if he doesn't have to work twelve to fourteen hours a day, almost every day of the week, as if the world and Japanese work culture aren't both full of shit. He offers up generosity, gentleness, and genuineness to strangers in lieu of the suspicion or boredom many others would default to. The thing about Lark is that he's the kind of person you'd expect to be more cynical about life than anyone else. He's had to give up his passion of acting to work a 12 to 12 job dealing with rowdy, drunk Shibuya folk and tourists. His last job had him watching rich men getting way too handsy with girls half their age. Whenever I ask him if he's tired, he always says yes. And yet. And yet he keeps going, he does his work with an astounding amount of care and dedication, he manages to smile and laugh and joke around with his coworkers, and with me. I haven't known him for long, but he's the kind of person who manages to get all of his tenacity and care across without even trying—I don't even think he knows he's doing it. He always seems to be surprised when I tell him he's kind.

(He is kind, undeniably so. He's so kind that it shows on his face in a way that I'm not sure he's even aware of. Once I asked him if my presence was bothering him or making him uncomfortable.

Another time I told him that I was lonely because I had no friends in Japan. Both times I looked into his eyes, and I watched his heart break right in front of me.)

Somewhere within the medley of visits I've had with him at that Friday's, I got his Instagram and he told me his work schedule, and I started going every day that he was working, just to see him.

During one visit, he explicitly said to me during a conversation, "We're friends, though, aren't we?" And I've been thinking about it a lot. How did this happen? Why did it happen? I've rarely ever made a friend by pure chance like this—usually when I make friends, it's because I'm in a class with them, or we're introduced by a mutual friend, or we're forced into co-editorship for our campus publication together. I honestly didn't think I was even capable of making friends this way, because... Well, what about me would compel a total stranger to think I was worth befriending if they didn't *have* to connect with me?

To me, making a genuine connection with someone I respect and admire as much as Lark—especially when I'm in a foreign country, especially when it happened basically by accident—is nothing short of a miracle. Somehow all the stars aligned so that my Japanese comprehension is good enough to understand him, and his English skills are good enough to communicate with me, and we're such strikingly similar people that we don't even really need words sometimes. So we've become friends in spite of our language barrier, yes—the stumbling over words and the long pauses and the slow sentences and the "Sorry, say it again?"s—but we've also become friends *because* of our language barrier.

You see, I've been thinking a lot about languages recently, and I've realized that they don't really matter. As in, humans can communicate their genuine emotions to each other even if they don't speak the same language—we don't *need* to understand each other's words to understand each other's feelings. Lark has proven that to me. We meet eyes while he works and we share silent smiles before I get shy and look away again. His coworkers take a few seconds between jobs to goof around with him, and then he turns back to me, and we both laugh. I take my glasses off to rub at my face, because I'm so tired, so cold, so lonely, and he takes one look at me and asks, "You okay?"

A lot of our bonding has happened through these little moments, I think. The time we spend not talking, him washing cups, me watching him work. The soft but heavy sighs he releases whenever he finishes another drink rush. The wave I give him every time I walk in, and the head nod I always receive in return. These moments need no speech, and in fact are all the more sacred without them. The eyes can say a lot. So can the lips, even when they're not forming words.

We do still talk, though. We talk a lot, as much as I can bring myself to without getting horribly anxious about it. And we've been texting, too, though Lark is ridiculously bad at it, and we both know it. I can tell just how rough his English is, and I'm certain he could say the same (or worse) of my Japanese, but we both try anyway. It's usually not really the words we say that strike me the most about our communication—although sometimes it is—it's the fact that we're *trying*. Oh, we're both trying *so* hard, even though speaking a language you're not fluent in is one of the most embarrassing things you could do. It takes so much effort, so much energy and patience, to try deeply communicating with someone in a language that isn't yet yours. And isn't that just such a profound statement of love? *I'll bear the embarrassment, the uncertainty, the slow speech and the mistakes and the awkward laughter, and I'll keep bearing it over and over again, every time we meet, for you.*

I'll learn new words for you. I'll teach you about words you never would've known otherwise. I'll use an app to translate the things I don't understand, so you won't have to do it for me. That's how much I want to know you. That's how much I want your company. That's how much I love you. Talk to me. Talk to me. Talk to me.

The second time I ever met Lark, I asked him where the name "Lark" came from. That was when he told me about his cigarettes. He asked what I thought of the name Lark.

And I told him, truly and honestly, that I think it's a beautiful name. Really, really pretty, because it reminds me of the birds.

He didn't know about lark birds, so I pulled up some pictures on my phone to show him, and he agreed. They are really pretty.

Another time, I tried to do work while sitting at the bar. I tried for an hour, and got maybe a paragraph or two of writing done, and then I slammed my computer shut and put it back into my backpack. Lark asked if I had finished my homework, and I said no, writer's block. He didn't know the term writer's block, so I explained it as simply as I could, using a wall metaphor.

"It's like— When you're an artist, and you want to make something—" I made gestures with my hands in the air to signify an invisible barrier, "but there's a wall blocking you. And you can't make what you want to, because the wall is in the way."

He understood after that. He's familiar with writer's block, art block, various blocks. The only thing he didn't understand was the term "writer's block," but after I made the wall metaphor, he realized, oh, it's like you're being *blocked*. But he still couldn't remember the term after a bit of time had passed, which led to him telling me he hoped I'd get over my "writer wall," and later texting me to encourage me to "break brock."

I know those might be embarrassing moments for him, but to me, they're so sweet. To be able to tell someone about a fun fact they don't know is so heartwarming. To be encouraged by someone so enthusiastically, even if the wrong words are used, is so uplifting. And I can trust that his encouragement is that much more genuine, because he was trying so hard to use the difficult English phrase I had taught him. Instead of saying, "Good luck with your work," he told me, "Take rest for breaking brock!" And I thought, you know what, I will. I *will* rest, and I *will* break brock.

The words themselves are not that special, and in fact are quite silly. But the meaning behind them speaks volumes, way more than I think I could ever possibly express, even being a writer. The core of it, though, is, *I care about you, and I listen to you, even if I get things wrong. Keep telling me these things.*

I can only hope that I've conveyed to Lark even a fraction of the amount of unspoken care, attention, and love that he's conveyed to me in the time we've known each other. The kind of attention that says, *You are so important, you matter so much to me.* The kind of love that says, *Let's take a nap in the sun and heal when you have the time.*

It's a special feeling, knowing that someone's care for you reaches across language barriers, country borders, and time. That someone's willing to invest time and energy and love into you even though you won't be able to see each other anymore in three weeks' time, even though your conversations have to be so slow and careful. That's why I say we've become friends *because* of our language barrier as well as in spite of it—because what's being conveyed by the effort of connecting in second languages is that this friendship matters enough to do it. That this friendship isn't just one of convenience, because really, this is probably one of the most inconvenient friendships either of us has ever made. Shibuya is nearly an hour away from where I'm staying. We don't speak each other's languages fluently. He's so busy that he doesn't have time to hang out on his limited days off, even though he wants to. But I still visit him every day he's working at Friday's, and he looks just as pleasantly surprised to see me each time, and we learn more about each other every time we meet. So it becomes that much easier for me to believe him when he says, "We're friends, aren't we?" Why would someone who doesn't see me as a friend invest so much into communicating and connecting with me?

I know I'm not the only person who's made friendships like this, not by a long shot. And while I wish I could say that what happened to Lark and I was like a tropey Hallmark movie, a one in a million chance, it's comforting and cozy in a different way to know that it's happened to millions or maybe billions of other people across time.

It makes me happy that other people who I have never known and will never know have experienced the same kind of heart-thrumming, stomach-flutters-inducing, warm-in-the-chest sensation that comes with finding a kindred spirit in someone you thought you'd probably never be able to communicate with, at least not in a meaningful way. It makes me happy that it's a universal experience, because that gives me hope—borderless love, love that transcends barriers, exists everywhere, in everyone, all the time. It's not just me, and it's not just Lark, and I honestly like that way, way more. I want as many people to experience this sort of love as possible, the kind of love that moves mountains, and that causes you to become a regular at TGI Friday's.



john

By Willow Watson

i've always seen myself as a shadow of a person - not quite whole, artificially constructed - which would then in some ways make you only a shadow of a shadow, someone who grew up idolizing & emulating a brother who turned out to be a sister, & now you're not even that: with me at college & you back home, how are you dealing with applying to schools, with struggling through your senior year, with becoming your own person with no one to lean on, not even a brother like you were to me when i wanted to be someone else, nor even a sister like you would've if i hadn't left, heading to new england & forgetting you up in the mountains, just like i did in the marshes when i went to mates & you stayed back in high school east - after all, whether you've said it or not, i know it hurt when you didn't get in, & i see the same thing happening again, where you're worrying that you won't "measure up" (while i'm still beating myself up over college applications!), & i wish i could make you see

that you're admirable in your own regard;

that you're more of a person than i am;

that the fact that you haven't made your short film & the possibility that you might not make it to california for college don't make you a failure;

that i miss you, more than you can know, & it tears me apart to know that you are taking this all on yourself (it's what i'd do in your situation & i fear that you got it from me);

& i swear that when i get home for thanksgiving we'll exchange music we've found in the last few months, you'll tell me about *The Falls* & i'll tell you about *Altered States*, we'll walk to the little beach & plan out how you'll edit your film, & for the time that we're together you won't have to worry about the future.



The One Ace Attorney Game with no Official Translation is the Best and it isn't even close

By Nicholas Utakis-Smith

The games in the *Ace Attorney* series are, in my opinion, the best designed visual novels ever. Although there are many visual novels that have better writing, and *Ace Attorney* games lack the branching narrative that you might see in some games, the court case system employed by the series is core to what I want out of interactive fiction. Whenever I read a mystery, I want to try and solve it on my own and predict what happens next in the plot, so a mystery visual novel having gameplay that expects you to solve the mystery and show your work feels very natural. Often, when the *Ace Attorney* games ask you to present evidence, the games won't tell you what conclusion you are trying to prove; Instead, the player will have a suspect for who they think the true culprit of the case is, and pick evidence that supports that claim (usually, some of the sections can be a little obtuse).

Mystery writing and game design both have similar goals; They outwardly present a challenge that seems impossible, but then proceed to make that challenge not only achievable for the reader/player, but also to teach that reader/player how to overcome that challenge. If the reader doesn't figure out the solution in a good *Sherlock Holmes* story, then the explanation at the end will show how they *could* have figured it out; In the same way, if the player loses in a good game (especially a video game), it should be clear to the player in hindsight how they could have avoided losing. Of course, many non-visual novel game genres allow for similar kinds of interactive mystery-solving (notably "point-and-click adventure" and "immersive sim" games tend to be good at this). However, these games still put the gameplay first, and attach a narrative to the gameplay. *Ace Attorney* marries the gameplay and the narrative as an inseparable unit.

I also believe the *Danganronpa* games are as popular as they are in part due to largely copying the gameplay of the *Ace Attorney* games. I think this is a good thing; I wish more games copied *Ace Attorney*.

However, just because the *Ace Attorney* series has gameplay mechanics that complement the story of the games very well does not mean that story is always well written (~~as the *danganronpa* games demonstrate~~). The first *Phoenix Wright: Ace Attorney* is an anthology of 5 cases that share common characters and a world, but are mostly episodic. There is hinting at the events of case 4, *Turnabout Goodbyes* (which was the final case of the game in an earlier version), with the mentions in previous cases of something called "the DL-6 incident", an unsolved case from the past which Phoenix must solve in case 4. However, these cases are mostly their own thing, which I think is for the best. By not building every case around foreshadowing the big finale, the finale doesn't have any pressure to be that much grander and crazier, and just gets to be a good mystery.

The next two games in the series demonstrate the value of this episodic format very clearly. *Justice for All*, the second game in the series, and my favorite game in the main series, has basically no foreshadowing for the final case of the game, and yet said case, *Farewell, My Turnabout*, is, in my opinion, the best singular case in the main series.

While it does amp up the stakes by kidnapping one of the main characters, it also challenges the player's expectations that the previous cases have created *and* challenges the ideals and motives that Phoenix as a character stands for. It also gives the player a few clues that Phoenix doesn't have access to, letting the player figure out the true culprit far earlier than Phoenix. This turns the game from a "whodunnit" to a "howcatchem" mystery midway through, creating a sense of dramatic irony as the player has to figure out how to not only convince the judge, but also Phoenix himself, what the solution to the case is. On top of this, *Farewell, My Turnabout* is the only case in any of the games I've played so far that gives the player a choice in the ending, albeit a small one; The player can choose how the true culprit of the case is punished for their crimes. This isn't some radical branching narrative, but it's a nice form of catharsis by making the player feel like they're more directly getting back at a character who they've likely gained a deep hatred for over the course of the case. It also has one of my favorite uses of music in any game ever, timing a musical change to a sudden tone-shift in a way that I think works really well.

Trials and Tribulations, the 3rd game, is the least episodic of the first 3 games, which is a shame, because the episodic parts are really good. Of the two cases that aren't tying into the main plot of the game, *The Stolen Turnabout* and *Recipe for Turnabout*, both are really unique and interesting while also not taking themselves too seriously. *The Stolen Turnabout* begins with Phoenix winning a trial for theft, only to have that victory be part of a larger plot to cover up a murder. *Recipe for Turnabout* involves a guy stealing Phoenix's identity in the stupidest way imaginable, and somehow none of the characters notice until after he already lost a trial on purpose to get away with a crime, starting you in the retrial for said case. Unfortunately, 2 of the other cases in this game don't let you figure out any sort of satisfying conclusion, since they need to work as part of the larger story with the final case. Despite this, the final case doesn't have a clever twist the way the final cases in the first two games do. Spirit mediums and seances have been a core part of the plot since the first game, but they've always taken a backseat to the hard evidence when it comes to mystery solving.

In *Bridge to the Turnabout*, the big finale *Trials and Tribulations* has been leading up to, it's impossible to solve the case using hard evidence because of how involved it is with ghosts and the supernatural, leading to me spending the end of the case just waiting for it to finally be over. I finished the so-called "Phoenix Wright Trilogy" thinking this type of game just isn't suited to long-term plots.

Ace Attorney Investigations: Miles Edgeworth is a really good game. It's a spinoff of the main series where you play as the titular Miles Edgeworth. After the events of the first *Ace Attorney* game, Edgeworth realized his reasons for becoming a prosecutor were based on a lie, meaning you spend the entirety of this game playing as a man actively undergoing a career crisis while acting as an amateur detective. The fact that you solve all the cases outside of the courtroom is also neat. The *Ace Attorney* games have always treated the legal system in the games as a parody of real legal systems, a system that actively hinders attempts at real justice and that determined individuals must fight to help innocent people. The *Investigations* series furthers this theme by having Edgeworth actually working outside the legal system to protect innocent people from being falsely accused of murder. It also strikes a similar balance in plot structure to the first *Ace Attorney* game, with mostly standalone cases that introduce plot elements that become relevant later. However, the ending is weird. The game successfully builds up a recurring villain throughout the previous cases without ruining those cases' ability to stand on their own, and does pay off the setup with this villain quite well in the finale. However, it also pairs said recurring villain with another antagonist who is just some guy, who the player doesn't really care about, which makes the ending kind of fall flat.


Now, I would say that *Ace Attorney Investigations 2* is the best *Ace Attorney* game, but that wouldn't be accurate, because *Ace Attorney Investigations 2* does not actually exist. Rather, the fan translation I played of *Gyakuten Kenji 2*, the currently unlocalized sequel to the Japanese version of *Ace Attorney Investigations*, is the best *Ace Attorney* game. This is a really good fan translation, and I think the quality of this fan translation helped with that.

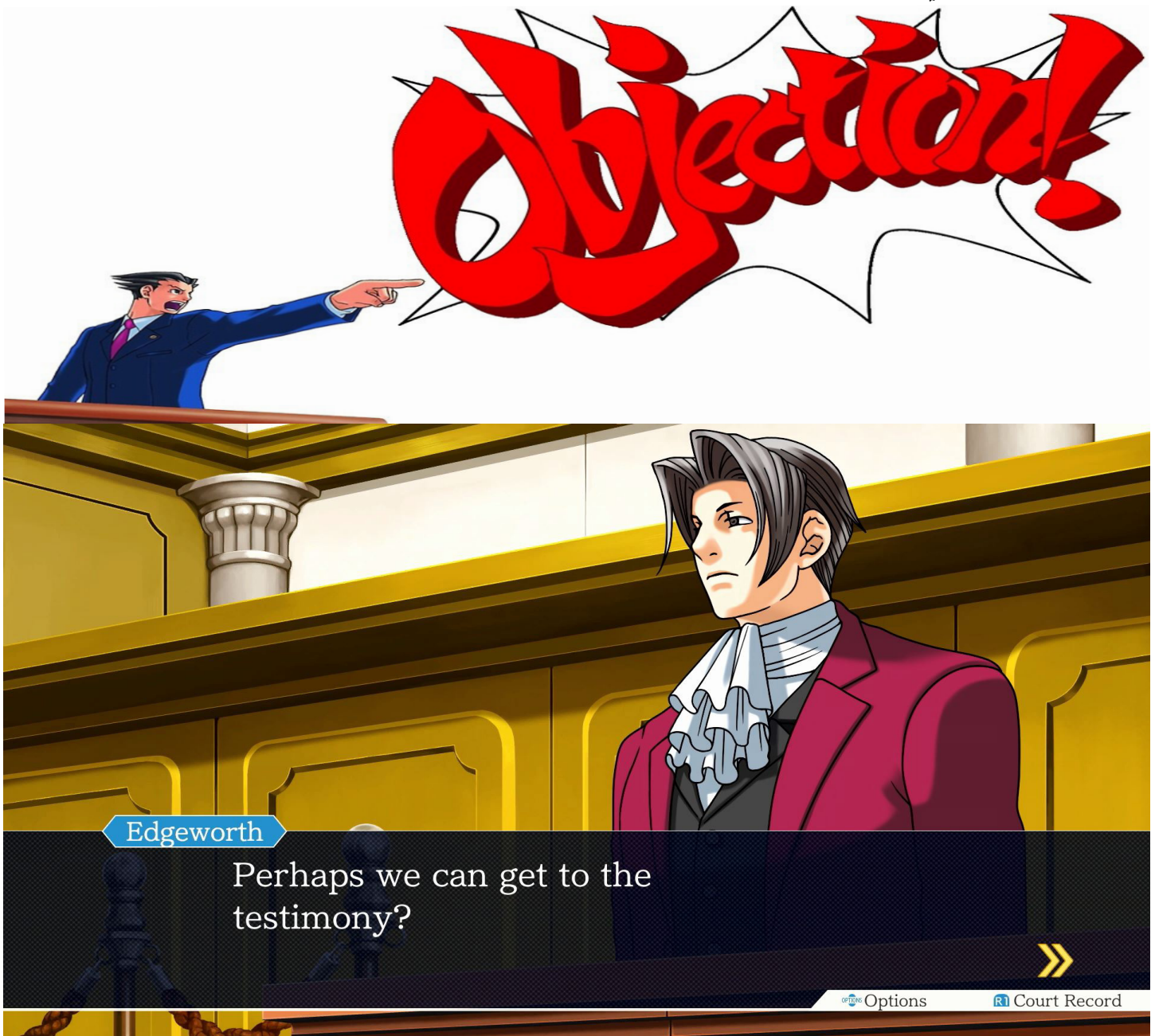
A link to how to emulate the fan translation is in this Reddit thread: https://www.reddit.com/r/AceAttorney/comments/wuo7sk/ace_attorney_investigations_2_in_english/. (I know this is an Omen submission and links don't work in print but just google "AAI2 translation" and you'll find it).

With that out of the way, why am I saying that *Ace Attorney Investigations 2* (which I'll be calling *AAI2* from now on for Brevity's sake) is the best game in the series? Well, first off, the big point I've been building up to is that *AAI2*, structurally, manages to pull off the tightly connected story that *Trials and Tribulations* was attempting, but manages to keep it a secret. Every case makes sense on its own, leaving the player assured of the conclusion they earned in that case, but leaving just enough room for doubt for the player to overturn their own previous deduction. When it is revealed that all the previous cases were orchestrated by the main villain, it doesn't take away from the previous cases; The culprits the player discovered previously did actually commit the murder the player makes Edgeworth accuse them of, but motives and opportunities that could have been written off as coincidence turn out to be part of a broader plot.

This game also has some of the best ideas for cases. The first case brings back one of the best characters from *Justice for All*. Normally bringing back beloved characters runs the risk of feeling fanservice-y, but this character is an awesome character here for the same reasons they were in their previous appearance. The second case begins with the culprit you found in the first case being killed in prison. It also introduces Raymond Shields, one of my favorite characters in all of fiction. The third case is, technically speaking, the oldest case in the entire *Ace Attorney* timeline outside of *The Great Ace Attorney*, which takes place in the 19th century. You play as defense attorney Gregory Edgeworth (Miles' father), in the case directly preceding his own murder in the DL-6 incident. While I criticized *Trials and Tribulations* for its prequel cases, this case is a prequel less for plot reasons and more to showcase a previously unshown setting and characters.

It brings Gregory Edgeworth from a character whose death haunts the narrative into a full-fledged, humanized character, and discovering what he was actually like as an attorney allows the player to participate in important closure in Miles' character arc. While the 3rd case is huge for Miles' character, the 4th case is a huge development for the deuteragonist of the *Investigations* series, Kay Faraday. The final case feels like a genuine payoff for all the setup in the other cases, with the antagonist feeling genuinely clever and his defeat incredibly rewarding for the player.

It makes sense that *AAI2* is the last game before soft-rebooting timeskip in *Apollo Justice: Ace Attorney*. It feels like it's all of the best ideas that the creators had for the characters and for the format of the games, all executed on near-perfectly. I can see why people might disagree with my opinion that *Justice for All* is the second best game in the series, but I feel like the only reason why everyone isn't just non stop gushing about the quality of *AAI2* is because it's a spinoff game you can't officially legally play in English. 





11/19/23

THE HAMPSHIRE EXPERIENCE

By Alex McNickas F22

If you have comments, please let me know!
ajm22@hampsire.edu

← → ! 🗑️ 📧 ⌚ 🔄

Shift cover needed!!!

Leafy Greene

Hi everyone! can anyone cover...

Me

to Leafy Greene

I can take your shift

Course Schedule

Adviser

Div II

2024 S

HACU	Caught Red Handed: History of Dye Trade
IA	Rethinking Power tools in Post-Colonial Era
TA	Feeling with Trees
OPRA	Mountain GOATs
5C-Smith	Eugenics in Latin America

SECTION LIES

??? Word Search

(a word search with no words)

Q L A Z E G Z V Q J F Q Z H L
R V B O V I Q H Y T E E R M W
V R P S V A J M D P W L K M C
R R Y H W S T Z L X I S Q X T
Z W S O J F C B P G A T J I U
A W L J F E K G L U I S Q S R
A O X X H L A Z R L N P W B U
X G B K P F V F E K J F S N E
X M C N E B D H S T E E V P A
A K C I Z R E G F L N O P W F
P P J X R E Q N R X E L F K Y
M C O P K B I R U P D I O K U
R Y A P U H D G U Q D Z E W H
H A X R I E I R V G A M I G N
D L G B P R K O B N Q W J K J

giasfelfbrebher	gamign	aw	popir
steev	flnop	kidiq	nupzj
nupzj	aw	aw	cnplkbl
dgrp	qjqwsvpf	lazeg	cxjsnksgq
aw	wfkze	kzetnlo	aw
aw	pfeol	slxbcc	rrwwog

??? Word Search by Jack Brady



Honeycomb

By Devin Dickinson

a blue spirit, a piece of art
drifting away underneath
the honeycomb stars
to tie up your heartache
and drag my teeth
along the neck of your passion
all because I'm weak
and shrouded in vulnerability
this skin I wear
is simply appropriation of a corpse's fashion
like rotting fruit beneath dying leaves
just clinging to everything that could be



CONTENT WARNING FOR THE FOLLOWING SUBMISSION: DEPICTIONS OF DROWNING AND SELF HARM

Riptide

By Nicholas Utakis-Smith

I think the problem for me was that swimming in the ocean was too much fun. I had swum in pools before, but that always felt too artificial, too calm. I'd been apprehensive about going in the real, actual, ocean, scared by stories about tsunamis and shipwrecks and the warnings the lifeguards gave us about the dangerous riptide. Once I'd actually gotten used to the temperature, I noticed how gentle it all was. It wasn't scary like what I had imagined, but it wasn't flat or empty like the pools I had been to. It was animated and full of life, but caring and gentle. The freedom and joy this brought me was the greatest part of the trick the ocean pulled on me, and I enjoyed myself too much to realize where these gentle currents had brought me.

It was too late that I realized I was suddenly very far away from the shore. I hadn't noticed the waves getting any more fierce, but as I tried to push myself towards land I suddenly felt a great deal of resistance. I saw a figure in the distance of a person in red slowly moving across the water towards me. I started paddling more harshly, common sense escaping me as it gave way to panic and exhaustion. I found that the more I attempted to pull myself up and towards the shore, the more I was pulled down and away into the ocean. I was now up to my eyes in water, my labored shallow breaths breathing out bubbles into the water, and breathing in full breaths of salt water.

My thoughts became more and more clouded as more and more time passed since my last breath of fresh air, and I found myself pulled under. I felt the seawater seep into my being, my skin being brined and streams of water running into my mouth, eyes, and nose, through my body, and out my other ends; As it flowed, it washed away parts of myself and left nothing but saline in its place.

I awoke in the bed of an emergency room, the bright lights a stark contrast to the water-filtered light beneath the surface of the ocean. I felt the gazes of those around me as they waited in silence for me to become lucid. What happened was that the calm area of the water was slowly drifting to the dangerous area. I simply hadn't noticed this drift, and had been swept out to sea without realizing, before the lifeguard had caught up to me and brought me back to shore. By the time they got to me, I had already passed out. That night, I was exhausted from all the energy I spent panicking, and I passed out almost right away.

I awoke, and it felt like I had just come out of the ocean. My skin felt briny and scaly, my throat felt salty, and I felt wet. My bedsheets were so soaked with what I assumed was my own salty sweat that it felt like I was still in the gentle movement of the ocean before it had ensnared me. I checked my alarm clock as I sat up. It was already noon and I was just getting up. I walked out into the living room and saw my mother sitting there.

"How are you feeling today?" she said.

"I still feel like I just got pulled out of the water." I said. "Actually, I feel even more like that today than I did yesterday."

"Well, you were pretty out of it yesterday," my mother replied, "It makes sense that it'd be rough for you now that you're finally processing what happened. We could go home early if the sea is reminding you too much of yesterday."

I should probably mention where we were. My family doesn't live by the ocean, but we do live a couple hours train ride away from a beach town. When I have off from school and my parents have off from work, we reserve an AirBnB in the area and ride over here for the break. In this case, it was summer break. My mom has off the entire summer by virtue of being a teacher, and my dad gets to work remotely so he can just do his work over video call from his room in the house we're renting.

So we were planning to stay here for the next week, and then head home. I ended up telling my mom no, that I wanted to stay here. I liked the smell of the salty air.

I also secretly hoped I would be able to go back to the water again to replace my unpleasant memories of the ocean with something I'd remember more fondly.

Still, there was a lot more to do in this town than swimming. There was a diner that was still serving brunch food even in the afternoon, and being able to get pancakes there at 1:30pm let me imagine it was still mid-morning and I had gotten up at my usual 8:30-8:45 am. It let me imagine that I had a normal day swimming at the beach yesterday, and that I had gone to bed around 11:30 like I usually like to do. Then, there was a small local museum about the history and founding of the town, so we spent some time looking around that. I think that day genuinely made me feel that things were not only alright, but that they were normal. I think after brunch I went the whole rest of the day without thinking about my experiences in the water. We got dinner from a pub in town, and I went to bed at 11pm excited about what we'd be doing tomorrow.

I woke up far earlier than I would have liked, a little after 5am. Like the previous morning, I woke up feeling salty, wet, and scaly. My bed felt rough, like the feeling of accidentally getting a bunch of gravel in your shoe but throughout the entire bed, across my back and legs. I pulled myself up and looked behind me at the bedding. It appeared to be covered in a heavy sprinkling of coarse salt. Was this some kind of prank? I can't imagine, given the level of concern my parents showed about my mental state after the accident, that they would pull something like this. I stepped out of bed, and as I pushed myself forward to start walking to the living room, I slipped. Thankfully, I fell backwards, and my brined bed was still there to catch me. I looked down at the floor in front of me and saw that there was a trail of water leading out of my room towards the door. Carefully, I waded through it, holding my balance on various objects around my room.

I asked my mother when I finally made it to the living room, "Do you know what the mess in my room is about?"

"The what?" she replied. I didn't want to suspect her of lying to me or playing dumb here, but I didn't know what else this could be.

"The salt in my bed and the water on my floor. Where did it come from?"

She sighed as she got up. "I'll look into it. You should focus on something else right now. We're doing the boat ride today, remember?"

The boat ride was something I'd been looking forward to since the start of our vacation, but that I was even more excited for now. It was the closest anyone would let me get to the sea since the accident, and it was

my chance to prove I could handle being around the water. It was a small personal motorboat, with just enough room for the boat owner and a few passengers, in this case, me and my parents. We were told to put on inflatable life vests, which I did, and we sat inside, feeling the moving air of the lake as we rode upon the waves. The sea was so close I could touch it. I found myself drawn to it, pulled in.

I felt the boat hit a particularly rough wave, and saw it as an opportunity. To the boat owner, and my parents, it would look like I had just fallen out of the boat when we hit the bump and landed back in the water. Only I would know the truth: I was leaping into the water, embracing the sea again, but this time with the protection of my life vest.

I was only in the water for a couple seconds before the boat stopped and the boat owner pulled me out. He looked like he'd experienced this kind of thing before, with how quick his reaction was. I wasn't happy about being pulled out, but he was very quick to blame himself and claim this was an accident, which comforted me. One of these days, before we went home, I would find my way back to the sea for real, and prove I could handle it.

They brought the boat back to shore, and we got a refund for the boat ride. We spent the rest of the day walking around town. My parents had clearly planned to spend more time on the boat ride, but wanted to cut it short after my little stunt. We had takeout for dinner tonight, and then I went to sleep.

I woke up with my back feeling rough again. I got up, and looked around, like before, and found myself surrounded by sand. I had gone to sleep naked, but now I was covered by a beach towel. I looked around, and realized I was on the beach. My mother was sitting in front of me, sobbing. "Why are you doing this?" she said, choking down her tears. "Why do you keep going back to the water?"

"What are you talking about?" I replied, still foggy from just waking up, "I just woke up here."

"I checked on your room last night, to see if I could find what made the mess. I saw you get out of your bed, walk outside naked, and climb into the water."

"I don't have time for this." I said, defiantly. "I can go in the water whenever I want. I can handle it."


And I did. I walked away, towards the shoreline, and waded into the waves, walking further until my feet no longer touched the bottom. I pushed myself through the waves, and pushed forward, until looking back no longer let me see the shore I had come from. At that point, I had gotten far enough in, and there was only one way left to go: down. I plunged my head under the water and disappeared.



Frigid: Part 1

A Noir Tale of Death and the Turmoil that Ensues Thereafter

By Clay Kesling

The story opens in 1935 at a small one-bedroom apartment in Chicago. This part of the city is a little quieter than the rest. They work hard, get home, eat, and then sleep. Not much a life if you ask me. The nonchalant novelty of this area had worn off. It mainly consisted of those city newcomers trying their hand at the big city. Mostly struggle. Mostly sorrow. Hope tends to dim out. But hard-working nonetheless. Marjorie Ambrose, renting this apartment for her 11th year, was a lonesome soul. She retired just a few years ago and lives alone with no pets. Her rotary doesn't ring with calls from her family. Her door doesn't often get knocked on by neighbors. She collects her mail once a week. She goes to the grocery once every two weeks. She pays her dues. She reads her books. She drinks her tea. Now, don't let this opening fool you. This won't be the story of Marjorie and her climb up in the world after being in a rough bout of melancholy. Sadly, she wasn't given such an opportunity. As she sat there sipping and reading like any other night, this night would be different... The door would slowly creep open with no noise. Another troubled, cold soul would slink in slowly behind Marjorie. Nobody would know. Nobody would hear. Nobody would see. A soul shrouded in misery and dread. A soul with no mercy. Marjorie grabbed her tea, brought it to her mouth, took in a mouthful...THUD! The hammer struck harshly across the back of her head. In one heavy-handed swoop, Marjorie was gone. The mug broke on the floor. Carpet soaked with Earl Grey. Book laying there, no longer to be read. Murder. Killer. Dead. Motiveless. Clean. Concise. The shadowy bringer of death disappeared into the dark alleys of the city. Maybe never to be found... 

blurry drawing of a bunny that I did on an old copy
of the omen and then took a picture of with my flip
phone camera

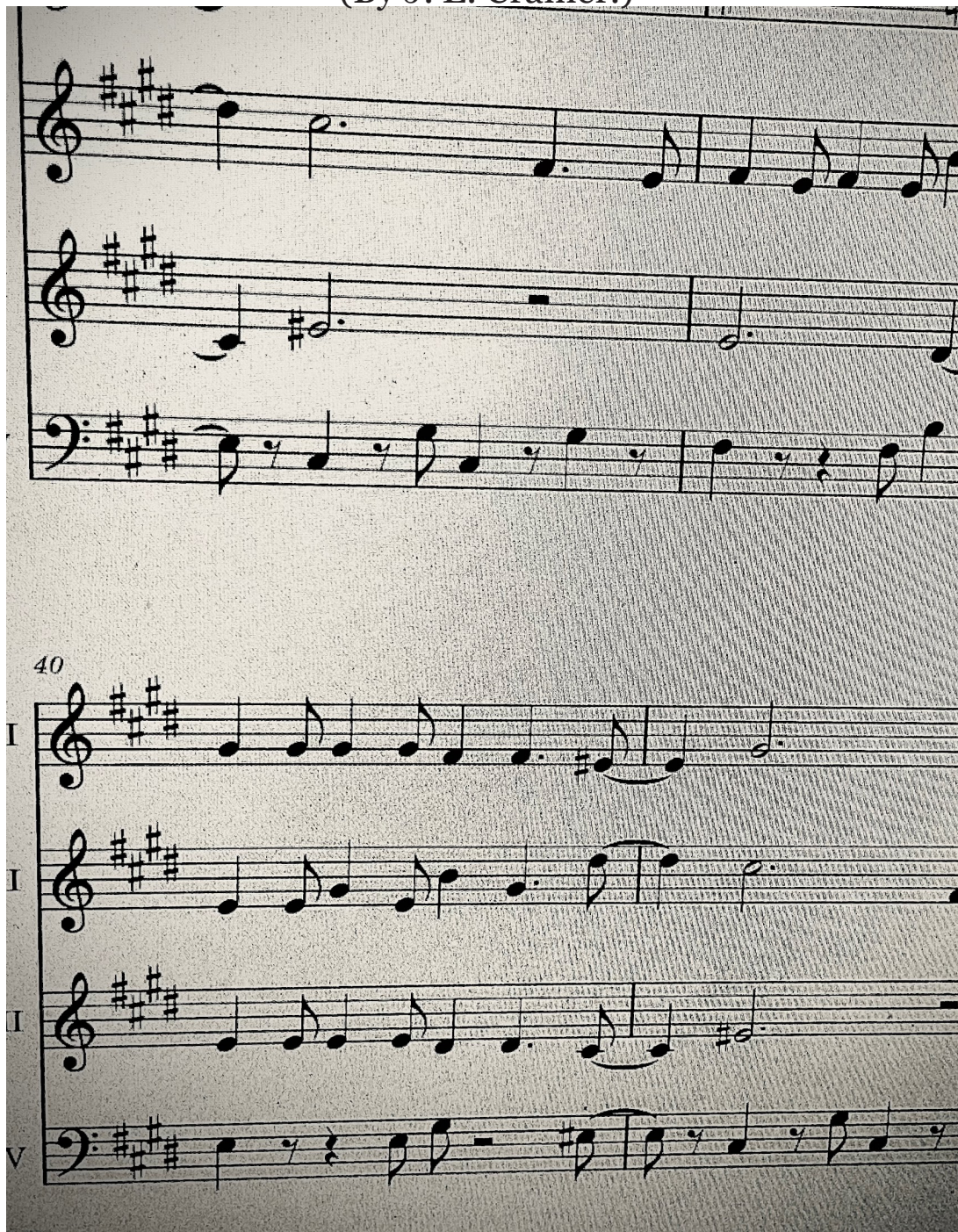
By Claire/Ceci Murphy-Petri



Partial Transcript of a Conversation with Rex Tangle Concerning WWWWWWW, Figure 1

by R. E. O. Weedshagon¹

(By J. E. Cramer.)



1. "Partial Transcript of a Conversation with Rex Tangle Concerning WWWWWWW, Figure 1" by R. E. O. Weedshagon is part of "For the Longest Time" by Billy Joel, an ongoing immersive work of fiction by J. E. Cramer.



CONTENT WARNING: MENTIONS OF SEXUAL SITUATIONS,
TERATOPHILIA, SITOPHILIA, COPROPHAGY, AND RHYMED
VERSE.

Dirty limericks to soothe the soup

By Luke Brisbois

There once was a man named Rhino.
Who said, "there's one thing that I know
if it's starting to hurt
as you squirm and you squirt
take your sorry behind to the gyno!"

A bartender auspicious and flirty
met a woman of just under thirty
Whenever the chance
they removed both their pants
as their clothes were simply too dirty.

A werewolf with claw and fang
decided he wanted to hang.
You noticed yourself
inches upward of twelve
and suggested instead a quick bang.

Today I was bragging to you
about how everyone knew
my member was large
and it rivaled a barge
when your mother piped up, "that's untrue!"

One wilderness Girl Scout troop
decided to make a big soup.
The commotion got louder
as I undid my trousers
and into the stew a big poop.

Went to the holiday luncheon
my date suggested some suction
Flew to the restroom
with lube of pressed juice
and used for cock ring a Funyun

For the young the hopeful and playful
there is this one bedroom staple
As you start to begin
you'll remain a virgin
because it don't count if it's anal

I tried to be part of the flock
but was given quite a shellshock
Under the equator
I used a straight razor
now it's balder than Ed Wingenbach



Section Hate

“*obligatory fnaf meme*”

(an unhinged movie review *spoiler free*)

by Jordan Hughes

feddy



“WAS THAT THE BITE OF 87??” - Markiplier

Okay so full disclosure, do not watch this movie in the movie theaters, because there is a 87% (yes that was intentional) chance you will be sat near around five 13 year olds who are just going to try and be funny the entire time or point out obvious references. That being said, this movie was fun, I mean I had fun watching it at least. Granted my standards for this movie weren't exactly high with the series essentially becoming one big meme, and the storyline of FNAF being so complicated and tedious just hearing a quarter of it can induce a migraine, so literally my only requirement for this movie to meet is for it to be fun... and it was! I think the plot was pretty standard for a fnaf movie, and by that I mean all over the place. The acting was pretty alright, I thought Matthew Lillard and Josh Hutcherson **insert the meme** did a pretty good job with what they were given, I thought the kid actress did a good job as Michael Afton's (Josh Hutcherson's character) sister, some other performances range from decent to just a tiny bit robotic. Speaking of robotic, the highlight of this movie is definitely the animatronic characters. Freddy and his gang have never looked better in this movie, they are not only incredibly believable as some sort of fun family-theme pizzeria band, but they can genuinely be intimidating when the movie wants them to be. And also as a horror fan I **need** to talk about how cool these practical effects look; Freddy, Bonnie, and Chica are all mostly controlled by people in suits as well as their faces being expressed through minor animatronics; Foxy is entirely an animatronic; and the cupcake, who is sentient for some reason, seems to be a hand puppet. And the suits were just awesomely crafted by the Jim Henson Company (you know the same company that made the fucking Muppets??). I'm an absolute nerd for practical stuff in horror so this alone was enough to reel me in. I don't really think the movie was all that scary apart from a few jumpscare but I mean let's face it, the FNAF series hasn't been scary since FNAF 4- Oops! But really, I think if you're a fan of FNAF you'll definitely get some sort of enjoyment out of this movie, maybe not as much if you aren't familiar with the storyline. But overall, I had a good time with this movie, I wasn't blown away but I wasn't disappointed either, and that's alright with me.

And if for some reason you enjoy my silly movie opinions, feel free to follow my Letterboxd because I am not above having a Letterboxd: [@Sleepy_Filmz](#)

And for now, I will see you next unhinged review.









This is the **back** of the book.
What do you think you're doing?
Who do you think you are?

Go to the other end of the book and start at page 1.
Your mother and I are very disappointed in you.



READING YOUR NEW GRAPHIC NOVEL: SOME OPTIONS

1	2	3
4	5	6
7	8	9 10

OPTION 1:
Follow the balloons from **left to right** and **top to bottom**, then move on to the next panel, the way you learned it at that sissy school of yours.

6	8	3
5	7	1
4	10	2 9

OPTION 2:
Read each balloon in whatever order appeals to you most. **Freestyle!** It's **your** book now! Don't let the **man** tell you which direction to read!